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War and Memory: The Role of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

Bassam Khawaja
Macalester College

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Title: War and Memory: The Role of Palestinian
Refugees in Lebanon

Author: Bassam Khawaja

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Bassam Khawaja

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Department of History
Advisor: Dr. Lynn Hudson
Defense Panel: Drs. Lynn Hudson, Peter Rachleff, Mahnaz Kousha

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Introduction

The Lebanese civil war is one of the most complex and convoluted events of the twentieth century. Taking place between 1975 and 1990, the war drew in a multitude of countries and factions, to this day remaining the single event through which the subsequent history of Lebanon is framed. While no single conclusive narrative of the war has been agreed upon, the collective memory of modern Lebanese society often attributes its start to the actions of Palestinian refugees. There is a strong consensus in Lebanon that Palestinians are to blame for the civil war. They have emerged from it “weakened and hated” by much of the population, a development that has carried severe consequences for their post-war presence.¹ In this paper, I argue that the deplorable living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon after 1990 are a direct consequence of their use as scapegoats for the civil war. Their very presence as Sunni Muslims is a challenge to the sectarian government system dominated by Maronite Christians. By utilizing the collective memory of blame, the government justified a troubling series of laws and regulations intended to prevent the naturalization of refugees.

But the role of Palestinians in Lebanon is not limited to that of the oppressed victim. Their presence in the country through the civil war would become central to the evolution of the Lebanese state. In the years following the war, popular perception of refugees changed with the passage of time. The political leadership of central religious factions in the country, first Maronite Christians, followed by Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, and the Druze, gradually came out against the acquisition of human and civil

¹ Michael C. Hudson, “The Palestinian Factor in the Lebanese Civil War,” *Middle East Journal* 32 (1978): 261.

rights by Palestinians. The refugee presence provided a common enemy that served as a crucial unifying factor in postwar Lebanon.

Disparity between historical accounts is a well documented phenomenon. In *Silencing the Past*, historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot claims “Something is always left out while something else is recorded... Thus whatever becomes fact does so within its own inborn absences, specific to its production.”² The case of Lebanon and the civil war is of particular interest, as the collective national narrative largely ignores what historical work does exist. Despite a strong body of scholarship that suggests otherwise, dominant Lebanese society in the postwar period persists in blaming the refugee population for the civil war.

I first challenge the memory of Palestinians as violent instigators by contending that the war was primarily the result of internal sectarian tensions inherent to a fragile and unsustainable political system. The positive correlation between civil strife and the presence of any refugee population is well documented in a 2006 study by Idean Salehyan and Kristian Gleditsch.³ But the newly created post-colonial state was riddled with division, ready for sectarian violence regardless of the Palestinian presence. While the refugee population in Lebanon certainly had an impact on the stability of the country, it does not account for the sectarian tensions and divides that preceded them. I then examine the contrast in how refugees were both perceived and treated before and after the war. The transformation of refugees in the collective public memory from the role of victim to that of instigator forms the base justification for their mistreatment in postwar Lebanon.

² Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 49.

³ Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization* 60 (2006): 356, 361.

Towards Civil War

In this chapter I examine the role of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon on the start of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, and question the extent to which the accusations of blame are justified. I argue that, contrary to common belief, Palestinians in Lebanon were not the direct cause of the war, but rather one additional element in a volatile situation that led up to the outbreak of violence. There are two areas in which Palestinians in Lebanon contributed to the start of the civil war. First, their presence as primarily Sunni Muslims in a sectarian political landscape worked to deepen the existing internal divisions in a Lebanese society that equated religion with political allegiance. Second, discriminatory treatment and legal restrictions in response to this threat pushed them to militarize. But these arguments alone are not proportionate to the level of blame and reprisal that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have born in wake of the civil war. Alone, they do not account for the start of the war.

In order to accurately judge the impact of the Palestinian presence, it is essential to examine their actions within the context of Lebanese history and politics. Palestinians entered the country in 1948, just two years after it gained independence from the occupying colonial French mandate. Lebanon was politically unstable, haunted by deep internal divisions, and not equipped to play host to a large number of refugees. While the actions of some Palestinians may have played a role in escalating the situation, it was primarily the threat of their very presence to an already explosive political system that contributed to the outbreak of war.

To support this argument, I will first lay out the historical context by examining the delicate sectarian political landscape that Palestinian refugees fled to in Lebanon.

Dominant Lebanese society, namely Maronite Christians, treated the refugees as an undesirable immigrant population and a demographic threat to continued Maronite political control. They ensured that Palestinians were discriminated against from the moment of their arrival. These initial attitudes and policies of the greater Lebanese population had a strong negative effect on the position of refugees in the country and contributed heavily to the deterioration of the situation.

I will first examine the history of Lebanon as a French mandate, highlighting the creation of a fragile sectarian state, where power sharing among eighteen religious factions is instrumental to the stability of the political system. I will then analyze the impact of inserting hundreds of thousands of predominantly Sunni Muslim refugees into this delicate balance. I argue that this event in and of itself had more of an impact on the situation than the actions of the refugees themselves. While Palestinians in Lebanon were certainly militarily active in the buildup to civil war, this took place within the framework of an unsustainable system of governance, constantly on the brink of collapse. Palestinian provocation was certainly detrimental to the political stability of the country, but was primarily a reaction to their categorization and treatment as a threat within that system.

Early History

While the area of Mount Lebanon existed within the Ottoman Empire, the territory that would become present day Lebanon did not exist as a single recognized entity until 1920. Those geographic borders, and thus the demographic makeup of the country, are a result of French colonial ambitions in the region. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 designated Lebanon one of the newly created French mandates under direct French

administration. As documented in Fawwaz Traboulsi's *A History of Modern Lebanon*, in laying out the permanent 1920 borders of the mandate, France exceeded the territory of predominantly Christian Mount Lebanon to include a number of Muslim coastal regions previously connected with Syria. French motivations for this gerrymandering included easier control over a crippled Syria, and the erosion of the Maronite Christian majority in Lebanon. The loss of that majority tied the protection of Maronite interests to continued French presence and support.⁴ The forced changes to the demographic makeup of Lebanon at a time when the territory was most unstable created a religious standoff that would shape the country for decades to come.

Lebanon was marked by instability and strife from the very beginning of the mandate, long before the presence of Palestinian refugees. As Meir Zamir demonstrates in *Lebanon's Quest*, while Maronites looked west towards France, a number of Muslims, angered by the division of Syria, called with increasing fervor for a reunification with the Arab world. They contended that France had produced a Maronite dominated state in order to both weaken Arab unity and as the result of a favored Maronite-French relationship. As part of the ruling majority under the Ottoman Empire, they were not willing to be marginalized under a Christian elite. In Syria, the loss of economically valuable coastal territory drew support for this position from the population and local leadership.⁵

By 1925, an Arab Nationalist uprising in the Syrian and Lebanese mandates had claimed over 8,000 lives, a stark testament to early divisions and the importance

⁴ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (Ann Arbor: Pluto, 2007), 75.

⁵ *Ibid*, 81.

attributed to religious dominance.⁶ At this stage, the fighting was directed toward French colonial forces and not yet inter-sectarian. But while the violence would soon subside, the contentious topic of religious dominance would remain a hallmark of the Lebanese political scene. Almost twenty years before independence, long before the arrival of Palestinians, elements of the population in Lebanon already saw sectarian issues as a legitimate pretext for violence.

The political system in the country revolves around eighteen officially recognized religious sects, which are frequently at odds with one another. The number of parliamentary seats held by each sect was determined proportionally using the Lebanese national census of 1932, the last national census taken in Lebanon. According to Julie Peteet, author of *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, this system was originally agreed upon to facilitate stability, but essentially created internal divisions that would plague the country continuously. It is primarily the four largest factions that are relevant to the reception of Palestinians in Lebanon. Maronite Christians are the dominant sect in the country. They control the presidency and much of the wealth. Sunni Muslims were the second largest sect, and have controlled the seat of prime minister since the power sharing National Pact of 1943. The majority of Palestinian refugees are Sunni Muslim. Shiite Muslims were the third largest sect, and are widely regarded as poor rural farmers. They are primarily based in South Lebanon alongside most of the refugee camps, and were thus most strongly affected by that presence.⁷ The fourth sect of greatest relevance is the Druze community, a “near-mystic” early offshoot of Shiite Islam.⁸ While their leaders represented a comparatively small population, and did not hold as powerful a

⁶ Meir Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 37.

⁷ Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 6.

⁸ Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 21.

political position, as historian Helena Cobban points out, the militarily powerful sect played a vital role in the formation of the Lebanese system of government.⁹ It is important to note that despite the importance of sectarianism in Lebanon, each sect was not free from internal division, nor were inter-sectarian alliances fixed.¹⁰

By 1926, Lebanon had developed a constitution under French supervision. The document formally outlined the religious power sharing system known as confessionalism that would prove to be so problematic later on. It is of particular interest that the constitution itself recognizes the shortcomings of such an arrangement, framing it as a temporary system to be eventually replaced with a non-sectarian form of government. The development of a constitution should not be automatically interpreted as an indicator of increasing stability. In fact, scholars of Lebanese history such as Zamir, contend that it demonstrated just the opposite. Six years after it was approved, France suspended the constitution and resumed direct control over the mandate, doing so again during the Second World War.¹¹ In that way, the constitution serves only to reinforce the extent of continued instability, French interference, and internal strife.

French backed Maronite dominance was one of the central causal factors behind instability in Lebanon. This pattern of Maronite control is well illustrated in the 1929 education reforms, where Prime Minister Emile Eddé closed 100 state schools he deemed unproductive, with disproportionate implications for the Muslim population. The vast majority of Muslim families sent children to (inferior) public schools in an effort to keep them away from Christian Missionary orders. The closure was clearly political, transcending the educational sphere to sabotage non-Christian opportunities. It sparked

⁹ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 21.

¹⁰ Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest*, 3.

¹¹ Ibid 28.

an outcry that succeeded in removing Maronite Prime Minister Eddé from political office.¹² The development of the Lebanese political system was neither smooth nor harmonious, and animosity between Christians and Muslims is still clearly present at that stage.

The national census of 1932 was an important political landmark that both exacerbated and cemented sectarian instability in the country. At a time when the requirements for citizenship were not yet fully defined, the inclusion of recent immigrants in the census shaped the way in which demographics would be remembered from that point onwards. A full 35% of the Christian population were recent immigrants as opposed to 9% of the non-Christian population.¹³ Their inclusion served to legitimate the demographic dominance of Christians in Lebanon. The 1932 national census is the only one carried out in Lebanon to date, and would become the tool used in determining parliamentary political representation proportional to sect. Because those proportions would never be updated, the census will form a basis for controversy over political representation.

By 1936, under growing public pressure, Lebanon and France started working on the lengthy process towards Lebanese independence. Maronites sought to solidify the Lebanese borders and end the threat of reintegration with Syria. In *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, Cobban argues that this was a valid concern as it had become the reality for all other independent territories France created in Syria. Meanwhile, Sunni Muslims sought to use independence to end French presence and influence in the

¹² Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest*, 76-78.

¹³ Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26 (November 1999): 233.

country.¹⁴ While French forces would eventually leave Lebanon in 1946 under pressure from England, this would prove to increase neither stability nor cooperation within the country.

The 1943 Lebanese National Pact is yet another important political landmark, outlining the exact conditions of sectarian governance. The undocumented, unwritten pact developed the power sharing principle by granting Christian dominance in the government, parliament, and civil services by a ratio of six to every five Muslims, using outdated demographic data from the 1932 census.¹⁵ Additionally, it set a tradition whereby the President must be Maronite, the Prime Minister Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the House Shiite Muslim.¹⁶ It is important to note that these ratios are fixed to that data, and do not reflect subsequent population changes. As such, Christian dominance was permanent, with no recognition of a need to reflect changes to the constituency. This unequal power sharing would become a strong contributor to sectarian based class inequality, and eventually, the outbreak of civil war.

The single largest testament to the inherent instability and potential for conflict within the Lebanese political system is outbreak of a short civil war in 1958. Accord to Lebanese historian Fawwaz Traboulsi, the violence was based on issues purely internal to Lebanese politics, and occurred without an armed Palestinian presence in the country. The conflict was a result of Sunni anger over an attempt by President Chammoun to serve an extra-constitutional second consecutive term, as well as dissatisfaction over the balance of power sharing. Maronite anger stemmed mainly from a proposal that Lebanon

¹⁴ Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 66.

¹⁵ Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited," 220.

¹⁶ Ibid, 70.

join the newly created union of Egypt and Syria, the United Arab Republic (UAR).¹⁷ The development raises two major points that will be relevant to later discussion of blame in Lebanon. First, the president sought to blame the war on external forces, in this case the UAR, and refused to take into account internal domestic factors.¹⁸ And second, 12 years after independence and totally absent Palestinian interference, Lebanon was still mired in potentially violent sectarian conflict.

Inherent Instability

A brief examination of labor is one way to study the impact of the power sharing system on the Lebanese population. The imbalances in political control lead to similar inequalities along socio-economic lines. While the conflict in Lebanon is primarily between religious factions, this is in many ways synonymous with class. Christians as a whole benefited from their guaranteed dominance, while Muslims, and in particular Shiites, suffered from far greater levels of poverty. According to Halim Barakat, author of *Lebanon in Strife*, by 1960 the elite 4% of the Lebanese population received one third of the national GDP, while 82% of the population received only 40% of the GDP.¹⁹ This had a great deal to do with the types of jobs that they were able to obtain, another area in which the country is divided across sectarian lines. Through the 1950s, the ratio of Christians to Muslims was “10:2 in industry, 11:2 in finance and 16:2 in services.” Among the Industrial working class, 75% of workers were Muslim, primarily Shiite.²⁰ The broad extent to which religion and class intersected at this stage in the country’s

¹⁷ Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 89.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 88.

¹⁹ Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 41.

²⁰ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 162.

history is one of the many volatile issues already in place before the arrival of Palestinian refugees.

One of the most significant contributors to instability in Lebanon was the continued reliance on a sectarian system of government. Its use in a community that already functioned primarily along religious lines had a strong impact on conceptions of identity and loyalty within the newly created state. As a result, one scholar argues, “[Lebanon] lacks that attachment to the national society as a whole.”²¹ Historians are largely in agreement that the communal framework of Lebanese society has preserved internal divisions and undermined a cohesive national identity. As Edward Shils writes in *The Prospect for Lebanese Civility*, citizens frequently give loyalty first to religious sect and local community, and then to the country. In periods of tension when particular sects are threatened, loyalty to the country as a whole takes a back seat. In *Lebanon in Strife*, social psychologist Halim Barakat attributes this to the historical geographic layout of each sect’s territory, with Maronites in particular living in almost total isolation.²² This particular placement of loyalty, and identification with sect over country creates an atmosphere where divisions are already drawn within the country, facilitating internal conflict.

The sectarian and socio-economic rifts within Lebanese society adversely affected the ability of the government to function effectively as a representative of the overall population. According to Barakat, the concept of loyalty to sect before country extended to politicians and created a central government that was incapable of dealing with internal tension, but instead followed “policies of compromise, nonconfrontation, and quite often

²¹ Edward Shils, *The prospect for Lebanese Civility* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966), 2

²² Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 33-35.

denial of the existence of challenging problems.”²³ This was particularly problematic as those confessional leaders who were in many cases directly involved in internal conflict were the politicians charged with its resolution.

The political system in Lebanon was a strong factor contributing to the fragile state of the country. Barakat described it as an “unstable form of nongovernment that has...sustained the existing social cleavages” within the society. This corresponds to the position Shils takes, whereby the government was frequently purposefully inactive so as to forestall the possibility of conflict, leading to an unworkable system of governance.²⁴ It was ineffective, nonrepresentational, and supported class inequality. Yet for the dominant Christian parties, the system provided a convenient guarantee of power that they were unlikely to relinquish. Even as the country approached civil war in 1973, the Maronite scholar Elie Salem denied outright the faults of the system, asserting that it had “furthered rather than hindered modernization. The slow gains accomplished...are the result of stable political institutions and a formula for government based on conciliation and consensus.”²⁵ This chaotic and heavily divided scene is what Palestinian refugees encountered in 1948, just two years after Lebanese independence.

Palestinian Presence²⁶

The presence of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is a direct result of the 1948 Arab Israeli war, and the creation of the state of Israel. Palestinians remember it as *Al-Nakba* or ‘The Catastrophe.’ During the war, Zionist forces intimidated and expelled

²³ Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 35.

²⁴ Edward Shils, *The prospect for Lebanese Civility*, 4.

²⁵ Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 186-187.

²⁶ This section will examine the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland with regard to the ways in which it affected Lebanon. It is not intended to be a background or summary of Palestine mandate history or the 1948 war.

over 700,000 Palestinian refugees to surrounding countries. Over 100,000 of these fled north, across the open border, to Lebanon. They first settled primarily in fifteen refugee camps across the country, as well as a number of unofficial gatherings.²⁷ In the following oral testimony, one refugee, Selim Hindi, remembers the expulsion forty years later.

We were frightened children. I was the oldest. We again spent the whole night hiding under the bridge to protect ourselves from bullets. Our fears were amplified by Zionist propaganda and by the massacres that were being carried out...The following day my father said that the only solution was for us to go to Lebanon. Our parents were convinced it was temporary, a question of two or three weeks, the time it would take for Arab arms to liberate Palestine.²⁸

As one studies the buildup to the civil war, the question inevitably emerges as to why Lebanon admitted refugees in the first place if it was indeed unfit to support them. As Hindi recalls, it was not initially assumed that Israel would defeat the Arab armies. Instead, it was taken for granted that the refugees would be returning in a matter of weeks, to the extent that Hindi's father did not see the need to take anything but a suitcase of clothes.²⁹ When considering that the refugee presence was not initially thought to entail a long term burden on the state, the Lebanese decision not to reject refugees is easier understood.

Because the Palestinian refugee crisis precedes the creation of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Palestinians do not fall under UNHCR jurisdiction. The United Nations body responsible for Palestinian refugees is The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the near East (or UNRWA), which manages and runs those camps that it officially recognizes.

²⁷ Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, 3-6.

²⁸ Selim Hindi, "Refugee Interviews," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18 no. 1 (1988): 163.

²⁹ Hindi, "Refugee Interviews," 163.

UNRWA was and still is responsible for the basic survival of refugees, providing rent-free space, shelter, basic rations, water, limited sewage disposal, health clinics and schools.³⁰ But as legal scholar Susan Akram reveals in *Palestinian Refugees and their Legal Status*, because Palestinian Refugees do not fall under UNHCR jurisdiction, they do not benefit from the UNHCR protection mandate, they do not fall under an expanded definition of the term “refugee”, and do not receive protections of the 1951 Refugee Convention such as rights to property, freedom from undue restrictions on employment, primary education, and identity papers. Nor are Palestinians able to employ the UNHCR mechanisms in place to guarantee these rights.³¹ Free from an internationally recognized guarantee of protection, Lebanon has much broader power over the conditions of refugees within the country, unhindered by any form of international pressure.

Palestinians refugees in Lebanon felt the immediate impact of sectarian class divides within the country. The form that their reception took was heavily dependent on their religion and socioeconomic status. The government granted Christian refugees citizenship relatively quickly, facilitating their involvement in those high paying professions restricted to Lebanese nationals, such as medicine, law, and engineering. A similar path was taken by wealthy Muslim refugees, who could afford to hire lawyers and prove Lebanese ancestry.³² While Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are commonly regarded as exclusively poor Sunni Muslims, this is an incomplete categorization, as it encompasses only those refugees forced to remain in the camps.

³⁰ Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies* (New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994), 23.

³¹ Susan M. Akram, “Palestinian Refugees and their Legal Status,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31 (Spring 2002):36-39.

³² Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 23.

Tension over the presence of Palestinians in Lebanon is primarily centered around their future settlement: permanent citizenship within the host country versus return to Palestine. As Simon Haddad lays out in an article addressing opposition to resettlement, if refugees are not able to repatriate, the naturalization of such a large number of Palestinians, primarily Sunni Muslim, would likely be sufficient to challenge Maronite dominance and the legitimacy of the 1932 census. No sect has openly supported permanent Palestinian settlement, as citizenship in Lebanon would weaken their claim to a right of return. Certainly the majority of Palestinians themselves have only expressed desire to return to their homeland.³³ However the issue would continuously emerge throughout later events, consistently presenting the refugees as a threat to Lebanese security and sovereignty. It is important to note that when thousands of Christian Armenians fled to Lebanon after World War One, they were quickly granted citizenship.³⁴ The tension in this case is directly related to the demographic threat Sunni refugees posed to Maronite power.

While no party openly supported the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon, Israel's outright rejection of the right of return increased the likelihood of eventual settlement as the only option. Israel accepts no responsibility for the 1948 war, and thus the position of Palestinian refugees. Additionally, the return of such a large Muslim population would detract from the Jewish character of the Israeli state.³⁵ The notion that Palestinians may be forced to permanently settle in Lebanon terrified the

³³ Simon Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Opposition to Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon," *International Migration Review* 38 (1964):471.

³⁴ David Gordon, *Lebanon: The Fragmented Nation* (London: Hoover Institute Press, 1980), 49.

³⁵ Rex Brynen, "Final Status Arrangements and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26 (1997): 45.s

Christian population and thus gained credibility even if it had no support within the country.

This threat of permanent settlement or *tawteen* would give rise to the flawed theory that any improvement of refugee conditions and rights would eventually lead to both a desire and ability to gain citizenship. However scholarship and oral histories clearly demonstrate that the need of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland is not based on the deplorable conditions in Lebanon, and an improvement in those conditions would not eliminate that need. The statement of Muhammad al-Bajirmi of the Rashidiyya camp focuses on the importance of return whilst recognizing a positive Palestinian role in Lebanon.

There is not a single Palestinian who has designs on the soil of Lebanon. On the contrary, we are ready for any sacrifice for Lebanon and its people, and we consider our residence in this country temporary. But the Lebanese government should help us lead a decent and human life. We contributed through the sweat of our brow to the building of the Lebanese economy – the south and other regions are witness to this. Palestinian hands labored alongside Lebanese hands to develop south Lebanon's agriculture, and it's not right to treat us like foreigners.³⁶

The statement is part of one set of oral histories released by the Journal of Palestine Studies in 1995. It is a particularly valuable source due to a shortage of Palestinian testimony addressing Lebanon. For example, the major oral history project dealing with Palestinians in Lebanon, the Nakba Archive, documents expulsion from Israel only up to initial resettlement in Lebanon.³⁷ Almost all orals statement of

³⁶ Muhammad al-Bajirmi , “Palestinian Refugees of Lebanon Speak” interview by ‘Abd al-Salam Aql, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 no. 1 (1995): 57-58.

³⁷ “Nakba Archive” <http://www.nakba-archive.org/>.

Palestinians in Lebanon were recorded after the war, and so it is difficult to determine the ways in which these statements would have changed over time.

However, the sentiment is clear: Palestinians want to go home but deserve decent living conditions until then. Nevertheless, the fear of a connection between improved living conditions and settlement was and remains one of the strongest influences on Lebanese government refugee policy.

Prewar Conditions

The initial reception of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is reflected in their early conditions and treatment. In turn, this would have a strong effect on the actions of refugees in the buildup to the outbreak of war in 1975. For those refugees unable to gain Lebanese citizenship, their living conditions were characterized by severe poverty, hardship, and economic marginalization. UNRWA was fitting 4-6 families in a single tent, and as Rosemary Sayigh documents in *Struggle for Survival*, winters were cold enough in some areas in the years after 1948 for children to freeze to death.³⁸ Families soon spent any money they had, including women's dowry jewelry.³⁹ Health conditions in the refugee camps were abysmal, with overcrowded camps contributing to high rates of gastroenteritis, respiratory infections and skin problems. Doctors or nurses based within the camps were rare before the 1970s, and so basic medical attention was only available during limited clinic hours.⁴⁰ Rather than working to alleviate these deplorable conditions, Lebanon used fear of permanent settlement to ensure that they were exacerbated through a long series of legal restrictions.

³⁸ Rosemary Sayigh, "The Struggle for Survival: The Economic Conditions of Palestinian Camp Residents in Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7 (1978): 106.

³⁹ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27 (1998): 51.

⁴⁰ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 55-57.

The lives of Palestinians in Lebanon were strictly governed by a number of laws, structured to ensure that refugees would never feel comfortable enough to settle permanently.⁴¹ The most consequential of these are the limitations placed upon the ability of Palestinians to obtain work, severely attenuating the potential for any improvement in their conditions. In 1951, the Lebanese Minister of Labor attempted to prohibit employment of all Palestinians in the country. While he was unsuccessful, Palestinians were required to apply for work permits, ensuring that they would be limited to those low paying jobs unattractive to the Lebanese population, such as agriculture and construction. Fayza ‘Adas of the Burj al-Barajneh Camp described the situation years later in 1994: “They try to break us every day. The education of our youth is wasted. Our university graduates are forced to work as masons...The Lebanese authorities won’t give them a work permit.”⁴² It was illegal for refugees to work in government and foreign institutions, and they could not join the Lebanese syndicates that controlled access to high paying ‘free professions.’⁴³ By limiting refugees to filling in the gaps of the job market, strict Lebanese labor law ensured that class mobility would be unachievable for Palestinians. They were to struggle for survival, deprived of any means to influence their conditions.

Palestinians in Lebanon felt unwelcome in every aspect of life. Their civil rights were undermined in almost every category. Refugees were unable to access basic government services from the very beginning, such as education, health, and social benefits. Laws over property ownership would fluctuate over the decades, but initially Palestinians could not own property without going through a lengthy and expensive

⁴¹ Jaber Suleiman, “Trapped Refugees: The Case of Palestinians in Lebanon,” conference paper, 2009 *International Protecting People in Conflict and Crises*, 1-2.

⁴² Fayza ‘Adas, “Palestinian Refugees of Lebanon Speak,” interview by Abd al-Salam Aql, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 no.1 (1995): 55.

⁴³ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 23-24.

process.⁴⁴ In the 1965, the League of Arab states signed the Casablanca protocol granting rights to work, travel, and residency to Palestinian refugees. Lebanon was the only country to submit caveats before signing. These included an insistence by the Lebanese government on the right to restrict work and travel, insuring that the position of refugees would remain unchanged, and rendering the document largely ineffective.⁴⁵ In what has become known as the protection gap, Lebanon consistently worked to ensure the tenuous legal stability of refugees in the country.

Refugees in Lebanon faced systematic discrimination and abuse. In one telling example, Palestinians dreaded the checkpoints at the entrance points to refugee camps, as they provided an opportunity for Lebanese officials to humiliate and physically abuse refugees.⁴⁶ Because workers passed through those checkpoints daily, they were constantly facing discrimination. These types of abuse were not limited to the camps, and continued throughout the buildup to the war. In 1973, a New York Times article documented a Lebanese army captain ordering a Palestinian prisoner to lie on the ground to be abused.

A Lebanese in civilian clothes came up and kicked the Palestinian. The prisoner writhed. ‘These are filthy savages’ the man shouted. ‘if we had our way we would kill them all.’ The man identified himself as a member of the militia of the right-wing, predominantly Christian Phalange party... ‘They want to change our Good system and make Lebanon Communist,’ he said. ‘We are armed and if the army will not put an end to this, we will.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Abbas Shibliak, “Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 (1996): 43-44.

⁴⁵ Are Knudsen, “Widening the Protection Gap,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22 (2009) :5.

⁴⁶ Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, 127.

⁴⁷ Juan de Onis, “Lebanese Jets and Tanks Attack Palestinian Units after a Cease-Fire Fails,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1973, 1.

The army was clearly engaging in the physical abuse of prisoners by allowing a civilian combatant to attack a Palestinian detainee. The outraged reaction to these types of discriminatory repressive actions and living conditions was a major cause behind rising tensions building up to the civil war. Both discrimination and extensive legal restrictions had an adverse impact on conceptions of Palestinian identity among refugees. According to Julie Peteet in *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, Palestinians were “acutely aware of the abnormality of their daily lives” in comparison to the rest of Lebanese society.⁴⁸ There was a clear attempt by the Lebanese population to project an artificial subordinate identity on refugees by emphasizing their alien nature, despite the fact that Palestinian ethnicity, language, and culture are near identical to those of Lebanon. In fact, this eventually had the opposite effect through the formation of a Palestinian Identity in Lebanon.

The deplorable living conditions faced by Palestinian refugees engendered a transition within their identity from refugees to returnees, and pushed some to take a more militant position on their situation. The term refugee carries the connotations of a helpless victim, while returnee indicates both purpose and agency. One Palestinian in Lebanon, Samiya, connects the return to Palestine with improved rights and living conditions. “I...knew Palestine was where we could achieve our rights as human beings. I had a vague awareness that our misery was because we were Palestinians – people from another place, who live here, in Lebanon, but are not from here.”⁴⁹ Viewed from this angle, the militarization of Palestinian refugees that would later be seen as a threat to state sovereignty was in fact brought about by Lebanese policy. But it is also an excellent

⁴⁸ Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, 124.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 146-148.

illustration of the fact that, from the perspective of Palestinians, a return to their home was associated with human rights, in direct contrast to the constructed connection between hypothetical human rights improvements and the threat of permanent settlement in Lebanon.

The idea that Lebanese policy had a strong impact on the militarization of the refugee population is backed up statistically. A 1977 study by Rosemary Sayigh found that most of the people interviewed had “first become conscious of their Palestinian identity through specific experiences of marginality.” One respondent attributed his militant activism to the influence of seeing his father as a victim. “The misery of his father’s life as an agricultural day laborer in Lebanon had affected him deeply.”⁵⁰ The policy of restrictions whereby refugees were forced to live in deplorable conditions had a strong impact on the appeal of the militant option as an avenue of improvement.

Emerging Militancy

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a period of transformation for the position of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO, was formed and quickly gained recognition among Arab countries as the official Palestinian representative entity. Fateh, its largest faction, formed as a militant guerilla movement and commenced operations in 1965. The emergence of a cohesive, independent Palestinian body held significant implications for the role of refugee camps and populations. Most importantly, it facilitated the transformation of their role, from refugees to returnees. After the defeat of the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian armies in the 1967 six day war, the Palestinian resistance movement assumed a much larger role in

⁵⁰ Rosemary Sayigh, “A Study of a Palestinian Camp in Lebanon,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 (Summer 1977): 26.

the struggle against Israel.⁵¹ This opened the possibility of involvement within that struggle among a refugee population that was gradually losing faith in the ability of Arab states to liberate their homeland.

The Cairo Agreement, signed in 1969, solidified the position of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. The document was initially kept secret, not publicized until much later. It guaranteed freedom of transportation, and legitimated armed commando movements as long as they remained in agreement with “the principles of Lebanon’s sovereignty and security.”⁵² While the agreement was a significant step forward for Palestinians in Lebanon, its passage does not necessarily indicate a softened Christian stance towards the refugee presence. According to Marius Deep, author of *The Lebanese Civil War*, it is likely that Christian ministers only signed the agreement in hope of securing support for presidency bids from Muslim lawmakers.⁵³

While the legitimization of Palestinian militants under the Cairo Agreement was not made public, it did result in their acquisition of control over the refugee camps. Initially, the camps were under the strict supervision of the Lebanese intelligence and police forces. The Cairo agreement facilitated the transfer of camp control to Palestinian commandos after 1969, a move that was immediately supported by the oppressed refugee population. One refugee, identified on as Rafiq, describes the power transition within the Ain El-Hilweh camp: “In the camp, the idea that you were freed from the reign of the Lebanese Intelligence and police was overwhelming because we had been living under the terror of these people. Our first reaction was to get rid of them in a very humiliating

⁵¹ Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War* (New York: Praeger, 1980), 99-100.

⁵² Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War*, 102.

⁵³ *Ibid*

way.”⁵⁴ This is clearly a response to the conditions in which Palestinians in Lebanon were forced to live for decades before the formation of the PLO, but also reveals the anger that refugees felt towards their situation, and a willingness to react to it.

A critical event in this period of transition was the 1971 arrival of the PLO in Lebanon. Initially, the bulk of commandos operated out of Jordan, the country with the largest Palestinian population, as well as the host of the PLO headquarters. This would radically transform with the conflict of Black September in 1971. The conflict began in 1970, when Jordan attempted to reign in the Palestinian commandos who were operating freely across Jordanian territory. The Council of Ministers issued a document intended to regulate or ban arms, vehicle use, gatherings, and party activities.⁵⁵ Each party blamed the other for the resultant year of conflict, termed a massacre by the Arab League.⁵⁶ The PLO was finally expelled from Jordan in 1971, and the Salam government took no action to prevent their movement into Lebanon. Commandos settled primarily in southern Lebanon, which became the central base of operations against Israel.⁵⁷ This would have lasting implications for the Palestinian population, as Israeli retaliation in south Lebanon would become the primary grievance of the host population against the Palestinian presence.

The arrival of the PLO marks the transition of the Palestinian presence from a marginalized community to a powerful bloc and perceived military threat to the Lebanese state. Due in part to Palestinian vulnerability systematically enforced by the host state, a strong resistance presence was now in Lebanon, legally supported by the Cairo

⁵⁴ Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, 132.

⁵⁵ Walid Khadduri, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1970* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1973), 758.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 920

⁵⁷ Kamal S. Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War* (New York: Caravan, 1976), 65.

Agreement.⁵⁸ PLO involvement in internal Lebanese issues was both complicated and multi-faceted. On one hand, they took provocative actions such as setting up military checkpoints in certain areas and checking identification, actions that would later trigger the phrase “state within a state.” On the other hand, they posed a challenge to the dominant Christian leadership by pushing leftist parties to press for fulfillment of demands.⁵⁹ The PLO played a double role, exacerbating existent divides while at the same time creating additional conflict and tension.

There was initially some strong support in Lebanon for the commando raids against Israel. A number of Muslims, and even some Christians among the Lebanese population had joined Palestinian commando organizations. When Khalil Al-Jamal became the first Lebanese commando killed in action, his funeral was followed by massive demonstrations calling for unrestricted freedom of activity for Palestinian militants in Lebanese territory. The proposal earned the immediate public support of Prime Minister Abdallah al-Yafi.⁶⁰ But while support for the Palestinian cause itself continued to receive verbal support from most political parties, this type of popular support for direct action and unrestricted freedom would disintegrate following the consequences of Israeli retaliation.

In an effort to quell PLO operations against its northern demarcation line, Israel launched a number of large scale attacks across Lebanon. These were targeted at Palestinian commandos, but had dire consequences for the general population, and in particular the Shiite of the south. These attacks are perhaps the single most significant

⁵⁸ Salibi, *Cross Roads*, 65.

⁵⁹ Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 195.

⁶⁰ Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War*, 34-35.

factor contributing to animosity against Palestinians in Lebanon. While issues of permanent settlement presented a hypothetical threat to Christian dominance, the attacks had a very real impact across the country and could not be ignored. Because those most severely affected were Shiites living in close proximity to southern refugee camps, widespread anger towards the militants was no longer restricted to the Christian population.

The first large scale Israeli attack against south Lebanon took place on the last day of 1968 when Israeli commandos blew up 13 civilian airliners at Beirut International airport. The attacks continued through the civil war eventually resulted with Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon.⁶¹ The incredible scale of Israeli operations in Lebanon is described by PLO executive chairman Yasser Arafat in a 1970 Press interview:

There were not more than 750 commandos engaged in the fighting...We faced an Israeli armored brigade of 100 Patton tanks, 200 armored cars and mechanized vehicles, and from 60 to 70 planes which flew over the area for 14 hours on the first day and ten hours on the second...the fighting lasted for 34 hours... I was present at the 1956 fighting on the banks of the Suez Canal, I was present during the Jun 5, 1967 operations and I took part in the Battle of Karameh and the subsequent operations, but I have never seen aircraft in such density, such continued shooting and such profuse firing as I saw in the Arquib fighting.⁶²

It is clearly evident that Arafat has an interest in presenting the battle as one that was difficult. As the chairman of the PLO issuing a press statement in an increasingly hostile country, it would only make sense for him to emphasize the commando struggle playing a defensive role. But allowing for that, it is still clear that Israeli reprisal in Lebanon was severe. In particular, the heavy use of aircraft and tanks indicates that Israeli troops were not overly concerned with killing nearby civilians. These types of reprisals would have a

⁶¹ Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War*, 39.

⁶² Khadduri, *International Documents on Palestine 1970*, 806.

detrimental effect on the reputation of, and support for, Palestinians in Lebanon.

In a 1972 New York Times article, one villager stated that he was equally “afraid of both the Israelis and the [Palestinian] guerillas.”⁶³ According to the article, “the reason for widespread fear of the commandos...was not any misconduct on their part toward the villagers, but their ability to provoke the Israelis into retaliation without being able to protect the population.”⁶⁴ These types of fears were confirmed time and again. In 1975, damage from Israeli artillery destroyed 166 out of 202 homes in the village of Shuba. 1,500 Lebanese citizens, the entire population, abandoned the village for shelter in areas under Lebanese army control.⁶⁵ While the Palestinians did not destroy the village, they would not avoid blame for the incident.

Israeli ministers lost no time in attempting to connect anger over the attacks with the Palestinian refugee population. In 1971, the Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan released a statement saying “when the Lebanese authorities allow the terrorists to operate against us from their soil, we have no alternative but to cross the frontier.”⁶⁶ This statement was reiterated in 1972 by Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon:

We have more than once warned the Lebanese Government that if Terrorist activity is resumed we shall take action ourselves to stop it...We fulfilled our duty to the security of Israeli citizens and took action ourselves. This is not only a punishment, but also an example of the operations we shall adopt in the future on this scale or another until an end is put to terrorism. I would strongly advise the Lebanese premier to learn before it is too late.⁶⁷

By pinning the responsibility for the attacks firmly on the shoulders of the Lebanese

⁶³ Henry Kamms, “Guerillas Fading From Base in Lebanon,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1972, 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Juan de Onis, “1,500 Lebanese abandon Israeli-Damaged Village,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1975, 3.

⁶⁶ Anne R. Zahlan, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1971* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974), 235.

⁶⁷ Jorgen S. Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1972* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1975), 151.

government, Allon was able to increase tension between the PLO and Lebanon. Additionally, he used that justification to transplant the Lebanese outrage over the attacks from Israeli forces to the Palestinian presence.

The Lebanese government resisted Israeli pressure initially. In 1970, the Lebanese Foreign Ministry issued a memorandum to the ambassadors of Britain, France, The USSR and the US labeling the attack violence “directed against the civilian population” and branding Israeli justification “a futile excuse.”⁶⁸ However this stance soon gave way as public pressure built up on the government to use the Lebanese army for national defense and bring it into the conflict. In May of 1970, the Council of Ministers banned the firing of rockets from Lebanese territory and strictly controlled the carrying of all other arms.⁶⁹ This standoff over the legitimacy of border attacks would form the basis for the escalation of tension in Lebanon, as the various sectarian alliances took sides on the issue.

Internal Conflict

The attacks also served to highlight the politicized nature of the Lebanese army as a tool for internal control rather than national defense. The government never deployed the army for the defense of the southern Lebanese border; that conflict was strictly between the PLO and Israel. During this period of the 1960s and 1970s, the army was only used for internal repression, often against students, workers and peasants. In fact, Traboulsi reveals in *A History of Modern Lebanon* that a 200 million LL (Lebanese Lira) army modernization project in 1969 procured weapons that were “unfit for national defense purposes.” This included such purchases as French AMX 12 light tanks that

⁶⁸ Khadduri, *International Documents on Palestine 1970*, 747.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 813.

would only have been useful internally.⁷⁰ As no action was taken in response to increasing calls for protection of southern villages, it became clear that the army was only in place to protect the system, not the people. After a 1973 attack by Israeli commandos on the streets of Beirut, an attempt by Prime Minister Salam to dismiss the head of the army concluded with a Presidential declaration that the head of the army was untouchable, and the dismissal of Salam.⁷¹ The controversy over the army is yet another issue that predated the Palestinians but was enflamed by their presence and proximity.

The very presence of the Palestinian population was a significant factor in the rise of the Lebanese student movement and tension between students and the army. During the late 1960s, student involvement in ideological political parties rose to new levels. As Barakat argues, “Students became increasingly disenchanted with the West and began to realize that colonization had continued to plague their countries in spite of independence.”⁷² Student protests against western interference, usually led by Palestinian students, were frequently organized around support for the Palestinian resistance movement. Political activity among students at the prestigious American University of Beirut was so widespread that the university required all enrolled students to sign a pledge in which they agreed not to interfere in campus academic activity.⁷³ The army was frequently used to quell demonstrations, and the internal use of force became yet another case in which Palestinian presence unearthed existing issues and inequalities.

One 1969 demonstration in response to restrictions on Palestinian guerrillas highlights the rift that emerged between the government and its constituency. The New

⁷⁰ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 175.

⁷¹ Ibid, 174-175.

⁷² Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 153.

⁷³ Ibid, 154

York Times covered the demonstration, reporting that of the Palestinians, students, and Leftist political party members present, “seven persons had been killed and scores injured in clashes between security forces and demonstrators.” The government imposed a curfew, and censored all forms of communication that “undermine national security.”⁷⁴ That the government was willing to use the national army on the Lebanese population, but not in defense of the country became a pattern that contributed to the tension leading up to the civil war.

After a raid by Israeli commandos into the capital city of Beirut went unchallenged, Druze leader Jumblat questioned the commitment of the government to its people and essentially encouraged the acquisition of arms by the civilian population. In a 1973 statement, he claimed “it is clear that it is now the duty of every loyal and patriotic Lebanese who fears molestation by Israel in one form or another to take steps to ensure his own defense.”⁷⁵ The fact that a prominent political leader was encouraging the population to arm itself may have been a result of his position against the dominant Christian leadership. But in any case, is an indicator of just how close the country was to civil war.

As the issue of Palestinians in Lebanon consistently became more volatile, other aspects of the country experienced similar instability. The most prominent and relevant of these was the economy. By 1974, foreign banks controlled 80% of bank deposits in Lebanon. While banks in Lebanon possessed over LL 6 billion, primarily due to Lebanese banking laws, very little of this went into the local community. In fact, a poverty belt had already encircled the capital city of Beirut, formed mainly of Palestinian

⁷⁴ Dana Adams Schmidt “Fatal Riots Bring Curfew in Beirut,” *New York Times*, April 24, 1969, 3.

⁷⁵ Jorgen S. Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1973* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1976), 433.

refugees and Shiite that had fled north to avoid border violence and an average income less than 19% of the city average. This was compounded by the fact that the cost of living in Lebanon had doubled between 1967 and 1975. Imported meat was being sold for up to 10 times the purchase price, while Lebanese agricultural product costs were heavily inflated, selling for a full 40% lower in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁶ This period of economic hardship, directly preceding the start of the civil war had differing impacts depending on sect and region, and was a strong factor in the outbreak of violence as grievances built up.

In a 2006 study, Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch concluded that there was a positive correlation between the very presence of refugees from a neighboring country and the outbreak of civil war due to a continued proximity to the cause of expulsion. They claimed that it would be prudent for host countries in that case to take preemptive action by managing humanitarian needs and addressing security issues before they arise.⁷⁷ Lebanon is a prime example of a case where this did not take place.

Palestinians in Lebanon had certainly brought their conflict with them, and the host government neglected them on a basic humanitarian level. Rather than addressing security concerns, the government chose to legitimate refugee militancy through a legal document. The study documents the extent to which the arrival of refugees often corresponds to an increase in conflict when the host government does nothing to stave this off. The data might be used to link Palestinian refugees to eruption of civil war. But more effectively, it constitutes further evidence that the very presence of the Palestinians, as a refugee population in an unstable country, was more consequential than any provocative action they may have taken.

⁷⁶ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 156-161

⁷⁷ Salehyan “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” 356, 361.

Changing Perceptions

The presence of the PLO, the conflict with Israel, and their impact on the population changed the way in which Palestinians were viewed in Lebanon. Not surprisingly the differing positions depended heavily on sectarian identity. Another element of note is the distinction made between the overall Palestinian cause and the specific actions of commandos and refugees. While ‘the Palestinians’ are commonly referenced as one monolithic entity throughout scholarship of Lebanese history, there were stark distinctions between various aspects of the population as well as the overall ‘Palestinian cause.’ This is true of both the actions of individual Palestinians, as well as they way in which they were perceived and treated. While the Palestinian cause was so popular throughout the Middle East during the second half the 20th century, no party was willing to come out openly against it. In particular, Christian leaders often claimed to support Palestinians in general while condemning the actions of the PLO in Lebanon, despite the fact that the physical manifestation of Palestinian cause at the time consisted primarily of PLO action from Lebanon.

Sectarian leaders in Lebanon had very differing views on the actions and impact of Palestinians in the country. The Druze leader Jumblat consistently came out in support of Palestinian actions. In a 1970 radio interview following internal violence involving Palestinian commandos, he declared that they had “behaved like angels.”⁷⁸ Similarly in 1972, the Sunni Prime Minister acknowledged some tension within the country, but declared that “the mutual links and mutual confidence between us and our Palestinian brethren have had and are having excellent results,” and denied the possibility of armed

⁷⁸ Walid Khadduri, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1970*, 778.

conflict with Palestinians in Lebanon.⁷⁹ The Christian leadership took a different position. In a statement later that year, Maronite leader Gemayyel made the initial claim of support for the broad Palestinian struggle, but then went on to accuse the refugees of occupying Lebanon. “The Resistance demands our frontiers as a base for its operations, it is imposing a sort of occupation on us and leading us into battle.”⁸⁰ It is clear by the vast divergence among these viewpoints that opinions of the Palestinians in the country depended far more on the possible implications for the sect in question rather than any specific actions of the Palestinians themselves.

The PLO executive committee response directly contradicts the Gemayyel Statement.

We are...amazed that the Palestinian presence in Lebanese territory should be described as an army of occupation...Where does the Palestinian People exercise this imagined occupation? Does its adherence to the provisions of the Cairo Agreement and its insistence on its right to defend its existence and dignity in the camp make it an army of occupation?⁸¹

It is important to keep in mind that these accounts are not impartial reports, but rather the personal accounts of each highly invested party, representing the situation as they perceive it. The executive committee has an obvious interest in promoting the positive image of the PLO in Lebanon. However, the existence of such completely contradictory statements underscores the complexity of the situation, and the contested role of Palestinians in Lebanon.

⁷⁹ Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1972*, 328.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 346.

⁸¹ Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1973*, 433.

Chapter 2: Sustained Violence

The Lebanese Civil War is as complex and murky a subject as the years leading up to it. Historians now simplify the war by placing it within the fifteen year period between 1975 and 1990, but by looking at primary sources from this time period, it is clear that the war actually took place in individual, independent stages. Each stage involved Palestinians in a different way, affecting the memory of militants and refugees in Lebanon. In this section, the focus is on the stage between 1975 and 1976. This two year period is remembered as the start of the civil war, and involved primarily Palestinian refugees and Maronite Christian Phalange militias.

Each of these stages caused a different set of reactions towards the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, culminating in widespread animosity and blame in the postwar period. By examining each stage using oral histories, political speeches, and scholarly analysis from multiple viewpoints, it is possible to discern the elements contributing to that animosity. Viewed against the backdrop of blame, the start of the civil war is of particular interest because Palestinians initially played the role of victim. In 1975, Maronite shooters fired upon a bus carrying camp refugees.⁸² Different sources put the death toll from the massacre between 21-27 Palestinians, but as stated in David Gilmour's *Lebanon*, it is overwhelmingly remembered as the start of the civil war.⁸³ Contemporary scholarly assessment acknowledges the postwar Palestinian reputation in Lebanon as purely negative. In examination of contemporary Lebanese attitudes towards the civil war, Sune Haugbolle speaks of an "implicit consensus that Palestinians bore a

⁸²T raboulsi, *Modern Lebanon*, 183.

⁸³David Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 110.

substantial responsibility for the war.”⁸⁴ However, this has not always been the case as is clear from the initial years of the civil war.

This section is an attempt to determine some of the ways in which Palestinians were viewed in the early years of the war, so that it can be compared to a shift in collective memory. Palestinians would later be transferred from the role of victim to that of instigator. This point is critical to understand, as the issue of memory and blame will mold the position of Palestinians in Lebanon during the postwar period.

First and foremost, it is important to place the start of the civil war in its historical context. While the bus incident served as the impetus for the eruption of sustained violence, it was also a product of the tense and fragile political situation. The bus incident itself was actually in response to a previous shooting where unidentified gunmen killed four of Phalange leader Pierre Gemeyal’s bodyguards in East Beirut.⁸⁵ It is a testament to the state of polarization of the country, that the Maronite militias instantly assumed the gunmen to be Palestinian.⁸⁶ That the shooting where the Maronite community was under attack is not considered the start of the war may be attributed to the lack of widespread fighting stemming directly from it, or the fact that the identity of the gunmen has never been confirmed. In Robert Fisk’s acclaimed narrative of the war, *Pity the Nation*, it is presented as a Maronite justification that would later be raised.⁸⁷ But while this previous shooting is often glossed over, it is important to emphasize that the bus incident did not occur in a vacuum. The massacre caused “large scale battles” to break out across the area,

⁸⁴ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2010), 19.

⁸⁵ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 120.

⁸⁶ Salibi, *Crossroads*, 98.

⁸⁷ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* (London: André Deutsch, 1990), 78.

in which heavy artillery was used internally in Lebanon for the first time.⁸⁸ Because it is this incident that is remembered as having triggered the war, and not the one in which Palestinian perpetrators may have been involved, Palestinians are still presented by historians such as Gilmour as the initial victims.⁸⁹ Interestingly enough, this memory has persisted alongside the broad allegations of blame leveled at Palestinians for the war.

Directly following the bus incident, criticism towards the phalange party spread across the country. The Arab Front called for a boycott of the party in Lebanon, saying “As a result of the latest massacre they have perpetrated, the Phalangists have become even more isolated and there has been wide-scale resentment of them in all Lebanese circles, including those which the Phalangists claim the ‘right’ to represent.”⁹⁰ While it is clear from the rest of the document that the Arab Front has distinct pro Palestinian leanings, the accusation that Maronites in Lebanon resented the Phalange party carries serious weight in sectarian Lebanon. The document does not simply make a claim against the Maronite party, but contends that this opposition is widespread across the country, including the Maronite population.

The Arab Front was joined by Druze minister Kamal Jumblatt, who called for a government boycott of the Phalange party in response to the massacre. Jumblatt stated that he would withhold confidence from any government in which Phalange participated, buttressing reports of anti-Maronite sentiment following the shootings. In response, a number of Maronite ministers resigned, bringing down the government of Prime Minister Rachid Solh.⁹¹ However, even though the violence was pitting Lebanese civilians against

⁸⁸ Cobban, *Modern Lebanon*, 126.

⁸⁹ Gilmour, *Lebanon*, 110.

⁹⁰ Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1975*, 407.

⁹¹ Salibi, *Crossroads*, 102.

one another and had already brought down the government, Palestinians were still not the target of widespread blame for the situation.

In his 1975 resignation statement, Lebanese Prime Minister Solh makes his position on the issue evident. "It is clear that the Kata'ib [Phalange] Party bears full responsibility for the massacre, for the consequent complications, and for the deaths, the damages, both physical and moral, which have afflicted the country as a result."⁹² While the Prime Minister is Sunni Muslim as dictated by the 1943 National Pact, the assumption cannot be made that he supports the Palestinian position. In fact, Prime Ministers in the post war years would later speak out vocally against the presence and improved condition of Palestinian refugees. But initially in 1975, Prime Minister Solh laid the blame fully on the Maronite militia, accusing them of "attempts to expand the fighting between Lebanese and Palestinians and between the Lebanese themselves."⁹³ At this point, Palestinians are still viewed as the victims of a massacre and not the instigators of the violence.

While the statements used here as evidence are taken from traditional opponents of the Maronite party in Lebanon, this does not necessarily discredit them. I am not attempting to prove that Palestinians bear no responsibility for the eruption of the civil war, but rather that they were not initially the sole recipients of accusation and blame as would later be the case. That said, the fact that Sunni and Druze leaders immediately used the incident to come out against their Maronite rivals, is just one more testament to the deep internal divisions present in Lebanon. In fact, some historical scholarship seriously downplays the contributions of the Palestinian presence to the start of the civil war. In

⁹² Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1975*, 415.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Lebanon in Strife, Halim Barakat claims “throughout the first year of the war, the...PLO...continued to call for a peaceful solution and constantly warned that the PLO might not be able to pursue a policy of moderation any longer.”⁹⁴ Barakat makes the claim that commandos entered the battle reluctantly, and would have preferred to confine their activities to the struggle against Israel.

When Phalange party leader Gemayel addresses the massacre in a press conference months later, even he does not overtly blame the Palestinian presence for the outbreak of hostilities. Although he accuses them of occupying the country towards the end of the speech, the bulk of his accusations are directed against a “force that came from outside infiltrated into Lebanese and Palestinian circles and forced on us a battle that is not ours and drove us into the odious course of civil war.”⁹⁵ Likewise, the Maronite Patriarch Kreish withheld allegations against Palestinians, instead blaming the inherent issues in Lebanon: “there are 1500 complicated problems in this country and they accumulated and all exploded at once.”⁹⁶ With the addition of the country’s Maronite leadership to the list of parties not directing significant blame on the Palestinian presence, it is difficult to envisage the state of affairs two decades later when they are seen across the country only as an invasive presence. Much of the following sections on the civil war attempt to determine to the ways in which this shift occurred, and extent to which it was either a result of Palestinian actions or a change in the way the events are remembered.

No analysis of initial positions in the Lebanese civil war is complete without an examination of the positions of Palestinians themselves. The Palestinian leadership continued to maintain that they had no political ambitions in the country, a position that

⁹⁴ Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife*, 196.

⁹⁵ Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1975*, 432.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 448.

reinforced the arguments being made in their favor. In any initial statement addressing the violence, Chairman Arafat and the PLO executive committee stressed the dependence of the Palestinian revolution on stability in Lebanon, but also demanding that Lebanon allow commando activity to continue.⁹⁷ This statement was later clarified in a press interview with Central Committee member Khalaf “We want only that our stay in Lebanon be a temporary one until such time as we can move from all the areas where we are present in the Arab world back to our country.”⁹⁸ Though this position may have initially improved the reputation of Palestinians in Lebanon, it would become more difficult to maintain as Palestinians became more involved in the war.

Regarding the instigation of violence, it is clear that Palestinians were initially able to avoid the blame and accusations in which they would later become immersed. A large part of this has to do with the eagerness with which Sunni and Druze representatives took the opportunity to attack their political rivals, a result of the entrenched sectarian issues in Lebanon. As the war progressed and Palestinians continued to play a major role, eventually prompting foreign invasion, that position would be less convincing.

The Massacre of Tel al-Zaatar

The initial stage of the Lebanese civil war culminated in the Tel al-Zaatar massacre of 1976. As with much of Lebanese history from the civil war period, the details of the massacre are difficult to pinpoint with satisfactory reliability due to a scarcity of sources, as well as contradictions among the sources that do exist. But this

⁹⁷ Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1975*, 428.

⁹⁸ Jordan S. Nielsen, ed., *International Documents on Palestine 1976* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978), 364.

paper is not intended to constitute a narrative history of the war. Rather, I am interested in the way that the massacre demonstrates the hatred already leveled against Palestinians in Lebanon at this stage, the lack of distinction made between perceptions of Palestinian combatants and noncombatant refugees, and the experience of noncombatant Palestinian refugees caught in the middle of the conflict. While Tel al-Zaatar is often overshadowed in historical accounts by the Sabra and Shatila Massacres, it is the event that lays the foundation for Palestinian mistrust of Lebanese society. Subsequent Palestinian insistence on maintaining their own camp security is founded in this mistrust, and would later become the base for later claims that the camps formed volatile security islands, outside of Lebanese law.

Tel al-Zaatar was an UNRWA run Palestinian refugee camp, situated in Maronite controlled East Beirut. Towards the end of 1975, Maronite forces had begun to carry out what they called “cleaning” operations. It was a policy of sectarian cleansing and imposed geographic segregation, under which they expelled Muslim residents from traditional Maronite strongholds. On June 4 of 1976, the cleansing operation reached the Tel al-Zaatar camp in the shape of a two month long siege.⁹⁹ The camp finally fell to Maronite forces under the command of Bashir Gemayel, the son of Pierre Gemayel, a prominent Christian leader with strong positions against Palestinian refugees. According to Helena Cobban in *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, as camp residents fled the area, Christian fighters “picked out all the men and youths they could spot, for summary execution.” They massacred 1500 Palestinians that day alone, in addition to another 700 killed during the siege, with no distinction made between commandos and noncombatant

⁹⁹ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 131.

fighters.¹⁰⁰ The Tel al-Zaatar Massacre was the first instance of mass refugee killings in Lebanon, and served to embed in Palestinian memory the extent of their vulnerability at the hands of the host population. It is a powerful and deeply troubling narrative that would later be overshadowed by dominant presentations of Palestinians as a threat to the Lebanese state.

In post-war Lebanon, the government would capitalize on the image of violent Palestinians responsible for the civil war, in the interest of propping up the sectarian balance of an unsustainable government. Personal accounts of Palestinian suffering and hardship are critical to contesting that narrative. While it is not my intention to present Palestinians purely as inactive victims, to omit the accounts of their trials in the interest of fulfilling a political goal is unacceptable. One camp resident, Abu Mohamed Aina, remembers the conditions during the siege of Tel al-Zaater:

Water became the most serious problem. We had to risk the threat of snipers to get water from the tank which was situated about 20 feet away from the Phalangist area...The water tank was like a death trap because it was situated in an open area. Snipers were everywhere, and even when someone tried to take the injured away from the water area, they were shot at. I heard that on one occasion a woman was shot at while trying to get back after collecting water. She was shot in the chest, but kept running clutching the water holder until she reached safety because to her the water was more important than life. Then, one litre [sic] of water was equal to one litre of blood.¹⁰¹

Aina reveals the way in which the siege and the treatment of Palestinians in the camp affected the entire population, without regard to who was actually a combatant. Assailants indiscriminately targeted the entire camp refugee population. The living

¹⁰⁰ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 141.

¹⁰¹ Abu Mohamed Aina, *Palestinians Speak*, ed. Aljah Gordon (Malaysia: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001), 8.

conditions described in the Tel al-Zaatar camp will be an important point of reference when examining the way in which Palestinians are depicted and remembered after the civil war. The dynamic of power established by the siege and massacre, in which Palestinians are denied basic rights and safety, is a fundamental part of their position coming out of the war.

Foreign Invasion

The Israeli mass invasion of 1982 known as *Operation Peace for Galilee* was not the first time in which Israeli troops entered the country but is without a doubt the most consequential. The invasion lasted four months, culminating in a siege of the capital city, Beirut. Israeli troops would continue to occupy parts of Lebanon for the next eighteen years.¹⁰² In terms of analyzing the ways in which the role of Palestinians in Lebanon is remembered, the operation is one of the most relevant events of the war. Because the invasion centered on the eradication of the PLO, it would later provide Maronite leadership yet another opportunity to brand the impact of refugees on the country. It is a prime example of the way in which Lebanese politicians use the Palestinian refugee question as a tool for furthering their own goals.

On June 6 of 1982, the Israeli cabinet reported that they had instructed “The Israeli Defense Forces to place all the civilian population of the Galilee beyond the range of the terrorist fire from Lebanon, where they, their bases and their headquarters are concentrated.”¹⁰³ In a clear reference to the PLO, the Israeli government initially claimed that the invasion was based purely on a need to secure the border against attacks.

¹⁰² Frederic C. Hof, “A Practical Line: The Line of Withdrawal from Lebanon And its potential Applicability to the Golan Heights,” *Middle East Journal* 55 no. 1 (2001):2.

¹⁰³ “Communiqué issued by the Cabinet of Israel announcing its decision to invade Lebanon and its aspiration to sign a peace treaty with it, June 6, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

However, just eight days later, a radio interview with then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon reveals that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) had continued north to take control of all roads leading to Beirut. He claimed that that this was because “the political infrastructure of the terrorist organizations is located in Beirut,” yet insisted that the Israeli “aim in Beirut is not to alter the situation in Lebanon.” The idea that the Israeli invasion was based purely on the objective of eliminating the threat of the PLO has become the dominant narrative, but is by no means the only explanation for the operation.

There is considerable speculation among contemporary historical scholars such as Helena Cobban and Fawwaz Traboulsi, backed by a significant body of evidence, that the invasion was in part a setup to benefit the Maronite party in Lebanon, at the same time that Maronite leaders were holding the PLO responsible. Bashir Gemeyel, who led the earlier massacre at Tel al-Zaatar, had expressed an interest in the presidency as early as 1976. This coincided perfectly with Israeli interests in installing a Lebanese president with anti-Palestinian leanings.¹⁰⁴ The idea of likely political motivation was brought up independently at the time by the Arab League. In a statement made later that month, they claimed “Contrary to declarations made by Israel that the invasion is for security reasons...Lebanon has been an Israeli political target for many years prior to the presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon.”¹⁰⁵ The Statement goes on to cite the 1955 diary of Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett:

The only thing that's necessary is to find a Lebanese officer, even a major will do. We should either win his heart or buy him with money...Then the Israeli army will enter Lebanon, occupy the necessary territory and create

¹⁰⁴ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 177.

¹⁰⁵ “Statement by the Arab League office in London demonstrating that Lebanon has been an Israeli target for many years prior to the presence of the Palestinians there, Late June 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

a Christian regime which will ally itself with Israel.¹⁰⁶

The statement cited a similar diary entry from former Prime Minister Ben Gurion in 1948, the very year the Israeli state was declared. The entries indicate that an invasion of Lebanon for political purposes had long been a goal within Israeli foreign policy. *Peace for Galilee* was not merely a reaction to PLO operations across the border. Yet it would be presented as such by Maronite leader Bashir Gemayel, contributing heavily to the way in which it would be remembered.¹⁰⁷

The allegations of political motivation leveled by the Arab League appear to be consistent with academic historical findings. According to Fawaz Traboulsi, author of *A History of Modern Lebanon*, Sharon envisioned a Lebanon that was primarily Christian, under the leadership of Gemayel.¹⁰⁸ The actions of Gemayel himself make a case for the intersection of the Israeli invasion and internal Lebanese politics. When Druze leader Jumblatt accused him of attempting to profit from the invasion, he simply replied: “we can all profit from it.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Gemayel ran for president on an anti-alien platform, criticizing the convenient Israeli presence while simultaneously using it to direct accusations against Palestinians. In a speech announcing his candidacy for president, he stated:

As for the armed Israeli presence, we consider it an alien presence. We all know how and why it came...and how often Phalanges statements and moves by the Lebanese front warned of the consequences that could result

¹⁰⁶“Statement by the Arab League office in London demonstrating that Lebanon has been an Israeli target for many years prior to the presence of the Palestinians there, Late June 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁷“Press interview statements by Phalangist Party leader Gemayel of Lebanon warning that the Israeli presence in Lebanon threatens its unity and rejecting armed Palestinian presence in the country, June 17, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹⁰⁸Traboulsi, *Modern Lebanon*, 214.

¹⁰⁹Ibid

from what the Palestinians were doing – and we got into the situation we are in now. This presence, along with the other alien armed presence in Lebanon, must come to an end. They must be terminated, and the sooner the better.¹¹⁰

In direct fulfillment of proclaimed Israeli interests, Gemayel used the Israeli presence to his advantage in shaping the scope and frame of the election. The message is clear: Palestinians have brought foreign occupation upon us, while the Phalange party had already both foreseen and warned of this likelihood. When he finally attained the presidency, Jumblatt christened him the “candidate of the Israeli tanks.” Traboulsi reveals that Gemayel’s own campaign directors later acknowledged he obtained the quorum of 62 parliamentary votes through “intimidation, terror, and buying MP’s votes.”¹¹¹ It is very possible that part of that intimidation and terror was the backing of Israeli troops. While Maronite leaders would blame the Palestinian presence and resistance for the 1982 Israeli invasion, they were simultaneously benefiting from the occupation.

While it is clear that the presence of Israeli troops in Lebanon is not simply a direct consequence of Palestinian combatants and their actions, this is one way it was initially portrayed. That development is no coincidence, but the result of concentrated efforts by leaders both in Lebanon and abroad. Bashir Gemayel himself made a statement to that effect as early as June 17.

It [Israel] moved in to defend itself because it could not tolerate a Palestinian army at its doorstep. It tried diplomacy and contacts and when these failed, it occupied. It did say however that it had no intention of taking over one inch of Lebanese territory.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ “Press interview statements by Phalangist Party leader Gemayel of Lebanon warning that the Israeli presence in Lebanon threatens its unity and rejecting armed Palestinian presence in the country, June 17, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 215

¹¹² “Press interview statements by Phalangist Party leader Gemayel of Lebanon warning that the Israeli presence in Lebanon threatens its unity and rejecting armed Palestinian presence in the country, June 17, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

In a firm departure from ‘we can all profit from it,’ Gemayel simultaneously lays the blame for the invasion squarely on the actions of Palestinians, identifies with the Israeli position, and seeks to dispel fear about the possible implications of the occupation.

Statements exonerating Israel and citing Palestinian actions as the sole reason behind the invasion were also plentiful on an international level. The same day Gemayel released his statement, US Senator Edward Kennedy made a speech on the Senate floor saying

In recent weeks, Israeli diplomats have been the victims of vicious assassination plots. Israeli towns and farms in Galilee have been the targets of indiscriminating rocket and artillery attacks by Palestinian terrorists in Lebanon. The people of Israel live in constant harassment and fear for their lives. The result is the continuing outbreak of hostilities such as the conflict of the past 10 days.¹¹³

Another Democratic Senator, Dennis DeConcini, went so far as to say “It is ludicrous to suggest that Israel is attacking a sovereign nation. There is very little reality to Lebanon as a political entity...little more than a base of operations for an international terrorist organization that should be eliminated.”¹¹⁴ These statements from across the world, indicting Palestinian actions as the sole motivation behind the Israeli 1982 operation, would have a profound effect on the ways in which it would be remembered. Popular blame directed against the action of Palestinians in Lebanon will later become a powerful tool in denying refugees civil rights in their host country.

¹¹³ “Speech by US Senator Kennedy (Dem.) justifying Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, June 17, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹¹⁴ “Speech by US Senator DeConcini (Dem.) congratulating Israel for its actions in Lebanon, June 9, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

The potency of the invasion as a political weapon is bolstered by the ways in which the Lebanese population remembers the Israeli presence. Because it had such a strong effect on the lives of Lebanese citizens, creating a causal link between that situation and Palestinians is a powerful way to influence and shape public opinion. A month after the occupation, the Arab League released a statement condemning Israel's treatment of the civilian population in Lebanon. "The measures the Zionist occupation authorities are taking against the inhabitants of the territory they have occupied in Lebanon...constitute a flagrant violation of international pacts, the Geneva Conventions and the principles of human rights."¹¹⁵ The statement is most likely in reference to an IDF siege of (primarily Sunni) West Beirut, ostensibly for the purpose of forcing the PLO from the country. The statement was released on July 8, shortly after Israeli officers enforced a shutdown of utilities in much of the city.¹¹⁶ This was soon followed by the tight cutoff of medical supplies as IDF forces continued to bombard the population of West Beirut, trapped under near total siege¹¹⁷. Despite receiving a written pledge of withdrawal from Arafat, Sharon continued to bomb the population throughout the final negotiation period, firmly connecting memory of the siege conditions to the PLO presence.¹¹⁸

The PLO Expelled

The departure of PLO from Lebanon, as a result of the Israeli siege, is the turning point of the Lebanese civil war with regard to Palestinian involvement. It marks the end

¹¹⁵ "Statement by Secretariat of the Arab League criticizing Israel's treatment of civilians in Lebanese territory occupied after its invasion, July 8, 1982." Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹¹⁶ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 184

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 185

¹¹⁸ Ibid

of mass armed commando presence and the end of Lebanon as a major Palestinian staging ground against Israel. Because of the common presence of both noncombatant refugees and commandos in the early part of the war, it is difficult to isolate the actions of, and popular positions towards, the noncombatant refugee population. The way in which Palestinian refugees were treated in wake of the PLO departure is an indicator of their general reputation in Lebanese society, an image that would certainly shape their treatment post civil war. Here, I explore the ways in which the departure was portrayed, and the impact it had on the perception of Palestinians in Lebanon.

Towards the end of June, almost a month into the invasion, Israel expanded its demands for the removal of the siege from around West Beirut. Initially seeking the departure or assassination of the PLO leadership, Israel now demanded that all PLO forces leave the country before the IDF would stand down.¹¹⁹ This demand was particularly troubling in the shadow of the Tel al-Zaatar siege, given that it ended with the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians, mostly noncombatants.¹²⁰ In light of this, Palestinian hesitation at leaving the refugee population unprotected, at the mercy of Lebanese militias, is understandable. The situation created a telling dynamic whereby vulnerable refugees expressed apprehension toward their future safety and stability, as the Phalangist leadership blamed them for the plight of the country. Similar to the way in which Gemayel used this dynamic to further his political career; the approach would be employed by Christian parties after the war to preserve the Maronite dominated political system.

¹¹⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 85.

¹²⁰ Rashid Khalidi, *Under Siege: PLO Decision Making During the 1982 War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 169.

It was a complicated process by which the PLO leadership came to the decision to withdraw from West Beirut and Lebanon. According to Rashid Khalidi, author of *Under Siege*, it involved only a handful of men within the core PLO leadership, and hinged upon US alignment with the Israeli position.¹²¹ The PLO initially hoped for a UN intervention and ceasefire, similar to the conclusion of previous Arab-Israeli conflicts. However, US insistence that Israel was exercising a right of self defense ultimately tabled that possibility. The PLO leadership eventually agreed that a negotiated withdrawal was their only option.¹²²

Throughout the process of planning the evacuation, Israeli representatives continued to emphasize a negative reputation of Palestinians in Lebanon, ignoring the effects of the Israeli invasion itself, support for commandos within the Lebanese population, and any distinctions between Palestinian commandos and noncombatants. While this is not surprising, it had a significant role in molding popular perceptions towards Palestinians in Lebanon. As the perpetrator of mass destruction in Lebanon, Israel and its representatives were in a clear position of authority regarding the reasons behind their presence. In claiming that Palestinian activity was at the forefront of those reasons, Israel was able to deflect blame and incriminate the PLO in one stroke. In an August 8 Interview, Israeli Ambassador to the US Moshe Arens claimed

If the PLO maintains control of Beirut, as they have been in Beirut for the past seven years, this will lead to the continuation of the kind of bloodshed and killing that has been going on there for the past seven years. You know, 100,000 Lebanese were killed during the past seven years...If it has not been for the Israeli action, if we don't manage to get the PLO out of Beirut, you'll have a continuation of that.¹²³

¹²¹ Khalidi, *Under Siege*, 102

¹²² *Ibid.* 109, 113.

¹²³ "Television interview statements by ambassador to the US Arens of Israel expressing doubt about the

Ambassador Arens disregards the entire history of the buildup to the war, the complex sectarian politics that contributed to it, the fact that it began with a Phalangist massacre, blaming the entire episode on the presence of the PLO. By drawing on the devastating effects of the civil war and Israeli invasion, he reinforces anti-Palestinian sentiment within the country. Arens bolsters this claim by implying that PLO concerns over safety are directly related to guilt, ignoring the state of war that the country happens to be embroiled in.

It's the PLO that was scared. And you know, they were scared primarily of the Lebanese, that the Lebanese would come in and beat them up and hurt them, because of the problems that they've had with the Lebanese and the great destruction that they wrought in Lebanon.¹²⁴

Statements like this helped contribute to a negative perceptions and memories of Palestinians in Lebanon by creating the illusion that the issue of blame was a closed case. If the PLO could be portrayed as guilty, clearly they were responsible. In fact, the entire expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon turned into a process of framing Palestinian actions in Lebanon, contributing to their lasting reputation in the country.

Sabra and Shatila

The expulsion of the PLO from Beirut is an important event in any understanding of the Palestinian role and image in Lebanon, because it drastically reduced the militant Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Before 1982, it was difficult to differentiate between attitudes towards Palestinian militants and noncombatant refugees due to the presence of

French objectives in the process of PLO's withdrawal from Beirut and explaining why Israel has besieged Beirut, August 8, 1982." Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

both and common generalization between the two. After the expulsion of the PLO, it is much easier to isolate wartime attitudes towards the refugee population.

An excellent example of broad and generalized treatment of Palestinians is a 1982 press interview with Bashir Gemayyel, in which he says “the Palestinians in Lebanon were no longer Palestinians seeking to return to their land. They turned into agents and a fifth column.”¹²⁵ In addition to making the accusation that Palestinians in Lebanon sought permanent citizenship, Gemayel makes no distinction as to *which* Palestinians he is referring to, grouping them all into a single category. The manner in which Phalangist troops under his command massacred noncombatants at Tel al-Zaatar is a testament to that lack of distinction. Consequently, the subject of protection for the Palestinian refugee population constituted a large part of PLO demands for their withdrawal from Beirut. They sought US and international guarantees for protection from both Israeli and Phalangist reprisal.¹²⁶ It is clear that at this stage, the refugee population in Lebanon was in a vulnerable position with no reason to believe that they were immune to sectarian violence.

Concerns over the fate of Palestinian refugees in the wake of PLO expulsion were confirmed on September 15, 1982 in the form the Sabra and Chatila massacre. Sabra and Chatila is without a doubt the single most telling example of anti-Palestinians sentiment in Lebanon. While Israeli troops have been found guilty under numerous forums for allowing the massacre to take place, Maronite militiamen were ultimately responsible for

¹²⁵ “Press interview statements by Phalangist Party leader Gemayel of Lebanon warning that the Israeli presence in Lebanon threatens its unity and rejecting armed Palestinian presence in the Country, June 17, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹²⁶ Khalidi, *Under Siege*, 167,

killing Palestinian men, women, and children.¹²⁷ The massacre of Sabra and Chatila was ultimately a sectarian act based on longtime resentment towards Palestinians in Lebanon, and a clear lack of any distinction between militant commandos and noncombatant refugees.¹²⁸

The day before the massacre, Bashir Gemayel was killed in a bomb explosion the source of which was linked at the time to a Syrian anti-Phalangist party. While Phalangists did not initially blame Palestinians, the Israeli Defense Forces put out the message that Palestinians had killed Gemayel and that Arafat had left 2,000 undercover commandos in Beirut.¹²⁹ Israeli troops moved in to take control of West Beirut, in violation of the PLO evacuation agreement and uncharacteristically unopposed by any of the 2,000 commandos that were supposed to have remained.¹³⁰ However, the allegation that these commandos existed provided the pretext for Sharon and the IDF to allow Phalangist militants into the camps, led by Elias Hobeika, one of the men responsible for the 1976 Tel al-Zaatar Massacre.¹³¹ While a great deal has been written about the extent to which the Israeli troops, Israeli government, and Phalange militia are responsible for the bloodbath, the purpose of this section is to unravel how the massacre demonstrates the degree of hatred towards Palestinians in Lebanon, foreshadowing the harsh treatment that they would endure with the conclusion of the civil war.

The horrors of Sabra and Chatila can only be truly described by the refugees that faced them. Souad Merii, a resident of Shatila camp recalls her experience of the massacre thirteen years later:

¹²⁷ Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country*, 175.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers*, 92.

¹³⁰ Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country*, 173

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 174

We saw 13 armed men outside our door...They took the money we had – LL 40,000/- - and all our rings, even my father's wedding ring. One of them shouted and gave an order to take us inside the room. He ordered us to stand up by the wall with our hands raised above our heads, with our backs towards them...They started shooting us. My baby sister was shot in her head, and her brains splattered over us. My father was shot in his heart, but was still alive. My brothers Shadi, 3, Farid 8, Bassam 11, and my sisters Hajar, 7, and Shadia, and our neighbor died right away...As for me I was paralyzed right away and I couldn't move. The soldiers thought that we were all dead and left our house.¹³²

Merii's statement is backed up by a mountain of evidence including the final report of the Israeli Commission of Inquiry which stated "all the evidence indicates that the massacre was perpetrated by the Phalangists."¹³³ The Maronite troops were clearly not after sleeper PLO fighters hiding out in the camps. The widespread looting and indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children is a violent reminder of the rage that certain parties in Lebanon felt towards the Palestinian presence.

What is of particular interest to the study of memory and blame in the Lebanese civil war, is that Maronite Parties in Lebanon have been able to overcome the shadow of the massacre, and retain support for a political position against the rights of refugees in Lebanon. This is largely a result of widespread attempts to pin direct blame for the massacre on Israel, as the traditional Arab enemy, while ignoring the intra-Lebanese sectarian bloodshed that actually took place. The Arab League released a statement in a September 21 emergency session in which they asserted: "this hideous crime committed by the invading Israeli forces against the Lebanese and the Palestinian camps in Beirut

¹³² Souad Merii, *Palestinians Speak*, ed. Aliah Gordon (Malaysia: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001), 33.

¹³³ "Final report issued by the Commission of Inquiry into the events at the refugee camps in Beirut, February 7, 1983." Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

with the aim of liquidating the Palestinian people and tearing the unity of Lebanon.”¹³⁴

Some documents excluded the role of the Phalangists completely. An excerpt from Soviet News on September 22 read:

Israel has committed a heinous crime. After the Palestinian armed forces pulled out from West Beirut, the Israeli troops treacherously forced their way into the city and carried out a massacre of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians.¹³⁵

This position was backed up in Lebanon by Bashir Gemayel’s brother, Amin, two days later. In an article written for the Washington Post, he condemns

in the strongest possible terms the massacre of unarmed Palestinian civilians that occurred at the refugee camps last week. The Kataeb (Phalangist) party has always stood for deeply held Lebanese values of human justice, human rights and peace. This human tragedy, with which the Kataeb and its members had absolutely no involvement or association, makes it imperative that there emerge a strong central government.¹³⁶

Gemayel would go on to become the next president of Lebanon.¹³⁷ Through widespread statements and opinions in this vein, the Kataeb party would exonerate itself while retaining the necessary political influence and support to continue its campaign against Palestinian rights in Lebanon.

¹³⁴ “Statement issued by the emergency session of the Arab League Council condemning massacres in the Palestinian camps in Beirut and holding Israel and the US responsible for them, September 21, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹³⁵ Statement by Tass on Sabra and Chatila Massacre, mid-September, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹³⁶ “Article by President Gemayel of Lebanon strongly condemning the recent massacre of Palestinian civilians at the refugee camps in Beirut and outlining his image of Lebanon’s future, late September, 1982.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

The War of the Camps

The final episode of the Lebanese civil war that is highly relevant to the Palestinian presence is the 1984-9 War of the Camps. The battle took place between Shiite militia and whatever militant presence was left in Lebanon. Shiites in Lebanon reacted to the thug-like behavior of Palestinian militants, but also to years of marginalization within a Sunni-Maronite dominated political system, bearing the brunt of Israeli retaliatory attacks in the Lebanese South. These reasons, alongside the continual branding of Palestinians in Lebanon as the root of violence, contributed to the five year long battle.¹³⁸ In a sign of their dwindling reputation, Palestinians in Lebanon were now the target of Shiites as well as Lebanese Maronites.

One fighter from the Shiite militia Amal (Hope), summed up the anti-Palestinian sentiment during the interrogation of Palestinian schoolteacher accused of being a combatant. “We are going to step on you Palestinians and Sunnis...What luck to have the chance to kill a Palestinian!”¹³⁹ As with previous stages of the war, and in an indicator of postwar policy, refugee noncombatants were given no amnesty, but were obliged to pay for the poor reputation of Palestinians in Lebanon. Amal besieged a number of camps, ensuring that no resident would be able to obtain fresh food.

There's a martyr's family, very poor, they got hold of a tin of sardines four years past its expiry date. The whole family ate from it, without bread. All were poisoned and had to be taken to hospital. A short while after they were taken again to the hospital suffering from hunger. They had nothing. There were many families like that.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 129.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 233.

¹⁴⁰ Gordon, *Palestinians Speak*, 65.

The fact that multiple sects were now aligned against Palestinians in Lebanon is a clear indicator of the affects of the war on their public image and standing within the country. Furthermore, by subjecting entire camps to siege and bombardment, the Shiite militants convey the clear message that there is no distinction to be made between whether or not targeted refugees are combatants or not. All Palestinians pay the price of their presence in Lebanon.

The Consequences of Reconciliation

With some violent exceptions, the fifteen year Lebanese Civil War ended with the Ta'if Accord of 1989. Negotiated in Saudi Arabia, the accord outlined the internal conditions for peace. It adjusted the sectarian quotas of the national pact to ones intended to achieve political balance between the broad categories of Christian and Muslim. According to Joseph Malia, author of *The Ta'if Accord: An Evaluation*, the document drew from previous pacts and agreements that entrenched internal divides in Lebanon by reaffirming its sectarian nature.¹⁴¹ Its only reference to Palestinians is a firm rejection of repatriation within the country.¹⁴² While it does constitute an attempt to deal with the issues that contributed to the civil war, the accord set up an environment that would facilitate the continued blame of Palestinians for the civil war.

The Ta'if Accord neglects to deal with the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon other than to forbid their naturalization there. In *Peace for Lebanon*, Deirdre Collings claims that it preserved the sectarian system that contributed to political and military imbalances in Lebanon, while simultaneously failing to deal with the refugee

¹⁴¹ Joseph Maila, "The Taif Accord: An Evaluation," in *Peace for Lebanon?*, ed. Deirdre Collins (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 31.

¹⁴² "The Taif Agreement," <http://www.mideastinfo.com/documents/taif.htm>.

population that was held largely responsible for the outbreak of war. The accord perfectly preserved the unstable situation that characterized Lebanon before the civil war. It lacks any provision for the protection of refugees in the country, creating a situation whereby the improvement of civil rights for Palestinians was highly unlikely.¹⁴³

Alongside a neglect of Palestinian rights or protections, the Ta'if Accord insists upon the immediate disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, a clause applied enthusiastically to the Palestinian camps. Section A of the one-year plan states: "Disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias shall be announced. The militias' weapons shall be delivered to the State of Lebanon within a period of 6 months."¹⁴⁴ For a population that has already faced multiple massacres, the loss of all heavy and medium weaponry rendered them once again exceedingly vulnerable in their host country.¹⁴⁵ According to Rex Brynen in *Palestinian-Lebanese Political Relations*, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are the perfect "common targets for Lebanese blame in an emerging revisionist historical memory" and "a scapegoat upon which most of the responsibility of the war can be placed."¹⁴⁶ The position of refugees in Lebanon depended on a number of factors, including widespread blame of Palestinians for the Civil War, their increased vulnerability in post-Ta'if Lebanon, and the preservation of the sectarian political system and thus the settlement threat. This ensured that refugees in the postwar time period were collectively worse off in terms of political or popular standing and no closer to achieving civil or human rights.

¹⁴³ Dierdre Collings, "Peace for Lebanon? Reflections on a Question," in *Peace for Lebanon* ed. Deirdre Collings (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 289.

¹⁴⁴ "The Taif Agreement," <http://www.mideastinfo.com/documents/taif.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ Jaber Suleiman, "The Current Political Organizational, and Security Situation in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 no. 1 (1999): 69.

¹⁴⁶ Rex Brynen, "Palestinian-Lebanese Political Relations," in *Peace for Lebanon* ed. Deirdre Collins (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 93.

Chapter 3: Memory and Aftermath

Palestinian involvement in the Lebanese civil war and the ways in which it is remembered had a devastating impact on the position of refugees within the country. The country emerged from the war in an almost united front against Palestinian rights, in stark contrast to the polarizing role that refugees played in the buildup to civil strife. While this disparity is preserved in primary accounts and historical scholarship, it does not necessarily reflect a typical Lebanese position in the 1990s where the majority of the population would simply not have empathized with the position of refugees. There is a clear and dramatic shift between popular perceptions of Palestinians in Lebanon before and after the civil war. The Cairo Agreement was abrogated in 1990. Since then, prospects for Palestinian rights in Lebanon have dwindled.¹⁴⁷ While certain factions and sects supported Palestinian positions in the prewar years, this was certainly not the case after in post-Ta’if Lebanon.

Sunni Muslims, initially supportive of potential sectarian allies, now sought to distance themselves from a population widely remembered as the cause of the war. According to Salim el-Hoss in *Prospective Changes in Lebanon*, having secured constitutional reforms that limited Maronite governmental power, the Sunni politicians had little incentive to further endanger their public image through continued association with Palestinians.¹⁴⁸ In 1998, Sunni Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri stated that “Lebanon will never, ever integrate Palestinians. They will not receive civic or economic rights, or

¹⁴⁷ Robert Bowker, *Palestinian Refugees: Mythology, Identity, and the Search for Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 76.

¹⁴⁸ Salim el-Hoss, “Prospective Changes in Lebanon” in *Peace for Lebanon?*, ed. Deirdre Collings (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 253.

even work permits.”¹⁴⁹ Despite the fact that the granting of civil rights does not imply naturalization, it was presented as a direct path to citizenship. As had been the case before the war, the dreaded specter of *tawteen* was used to justify treatment of refugees, now paired with a narrative that held Palestinians accountable for the civil war. Nationalization of Palestinians in Lebanon would serve Lebanese Sunnis more than the Palestinians themselves, as it might impede their claim to a right of return. That the senior Sunni representative in Lebanon spoke out against Palestinian rights is a clear indicator of their public liability.

In a similar development, other sect leaders took up parallel positions. The early disintegration of Shiite-Palestinian relations is evident from the 1984 War of the camps. However, after the Ta’if Accord, distinct parliamentary representation ensured that Shiites now had a sizable stake in the government, and thus, in the preservation of the sectarian system to which the Palestinian presence was a threat.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, a shift in the Druze position was evident as early as 1988, when Druze Leader Walid Jumblat said

Arafat’s dreams of establishing a Palestinian canton in southern Lebanon are ridiculous and detrimental to the Palestinian and Lebanese issues...The current troubles being fomented by Arafat are a plot against the Lebanese Patriots and Syria and a service to [Christian Leaders] Samir Ja’ja, Michael Awn and Israel.¹⁵¹

The statement is in stark contrast to one made by Jumblat’s father before the civil war, when he claimed that Palestinian militants in Lebanon behaved like angels. In addition to

¹⁴⁹ Bowker, *Palestinian Refugees*, 75.

¹⁵⁰ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 no. 1 (1995), 45.

¹⁵¹ “Statement by chairman of Progressive of Socialist Party Jumblat of Lebanon warning against the creation of a Christian state in Lebanon, September 29, 1988.” Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

continued animosity from Maronite politicians, Palestinians had now lost the support of Sunni, Shiite and Druze sects.

While political stances can be a good indicator of sectarian positions in Lebanon, they do not speak for the entire population. In a 1991 survey documented by Rosemary Sayigh in *Palestinians in Lebanon*, 75% of the sample population opposed permanent settlement. While it is no surprise that 87% of Maronites would oppose settlement, a full 63% of Sunnis opposed any naturalization of the population that held the potential to create a Sunni majority in Lebanon. More significantly, 40% of the overall sample favored actual military action to prevent settlement.¹⁵² That fact that such a large portion of the population would favor armed action against a refugee population is a dual indicator of both Palestinian popularity as well as refugee vulnerability following the war.

Postwar Survival

In the aftermath of the civil war, the preservation of Lebanese unity and the revised sectarian political system demanded the continued ostracizing of Palestinian refugees. Building upon established blame of Palestinians for the war, an unsympathetic government portrayed refugees in Lebanon as a continued security threat, despite the post-Ta'if disarmament of remaining Palestinian militias. In *Palestinians in Lebanon*, Jihane Sfeir claims that “more than ever before, the figure of the Palestinian is needed in Lebanon...The enemy within becomes the most significant element in constituting collective identity.”¹⁵³ By branding refugee camps as dangerous security threats, Lebanon

¹⁵² Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon,” 45.

¹⁵³ Jihane Sfeir, “Palestinians in Lebanon: The Birth of the Enemy Within” in *Manifestations of Identity*, ed. Muhammad Khalidi (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010), 30.

preserves the Palestinian specter while simultaneously constructing a pretext for the further deterioration of camp conditions in the post war years.

In addition to the continued threat refugees posed to the sectarian political system, in-fighting within the camps enabled their portrayal as dangerous security islands beyond the reach of law. According to independent researcher Jaber Suleiman, this conception is false, as Lebanese security forces do in fact enter the refugee camps on occasion. However it paves the way for the continued attribution of Lebanese conflict to the Palestinian presence. For example, following the assassination of four Lebanese judges in 1999, Shakir Abu Sulayman of the Maronite League immediately stated that “what happened in Sidon was the result of the existence of security islands that lay outside the authority of the state,” a sentiment that was echoed in the Lebanese Press.¹⁵⁴ Despite warnings from the president against jumping to conclusions and accusations, prominent journalist Jibran Tuwayni wrote

We do not intend to accuse the Palestinians of the massacre in Sidon before the investigation has ended. But the mere presence of Palestinian camps outside the authority of the state, with their weaponry and armed elements, naturally leads on to point fingers at the prime cause behind the security disorder.¹⁵⁵

In the excerpt, Tuwayni contradicts himself by endorsing the very accusation that he purports to discourage. The portrayal of the refugee camps as dangerous security islands by the Maronite leadership and the Lebanese press sets Palestinians up as a legitimate target of blame for conflict in Lebanon.

¹⁵⁴ Suleiman, “Political Organizational, and Security Situation in the Palestinian Refugee Camps,” 72.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

The notion of the lawless Palestinian camp in postwar Lebanon is a direct consequence of Lebanese government policy and purpose. Its existence should not be taken for granted or treated as an inherent part of the situation. A common understanding of camp security is demonstrated in a 2002 report by the Council of the European, “Palestinians can therefore almost entirely elude the control of the Lebanese authorities inside the camps. The Lebanese authorities do not intervene in conflicts and problems between Palestinians in the camps either.”¹⁵⁶ This type of fatalist analysis fails to examine the factors that resulted in the camp security situation, and thus contribute to negative portrayals of Palestinians in Lebanon. In *Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon: Laboratory of Indocile Identity Formation*, sociologist Sari Hanafi traces security situations in the camps to the fact that they are closed spaces, on “the urban periphery, lacking in green spaces, and with poor access and poor housing.”¹⁵⁷ This facilitates the ability of the host country to classify them as states of exception. Hanafi argues that the Lebanese government has “abandoned the camps and allowed them to become spaces devoid of laws and regulations.”¹⁵⁸ While this system functioned to a certain extent before 1982, the expulsion of the PLO created a power vacuum in camp governance. While Maronite leaders brand the refugee camps as lawless and dangerous security islands, a senior officer in the Lebanese security forces stated that the “camps are not under the responsibility of the Lebanese State.”¹⁵⁹ The statement absolves Lebanon from any accountability with regard to the Palestinian refugees, while actively removing

¹⁵⁶ Council of the European Union, *Refugee General report on Lebanon / Palestinians*. 7297/02. Brussels: 2002. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/467006622.pdf>.

¹⁵⁷ Sari Hanafi, “Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, Laboratory of Indocile Identity Formation” in *Manifestations of Identity*, ed. Muhammad Khalidi (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010), 48.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 59.

the camps from Lebanese jurisdiction. In the interest of national unity, the Lebanese government actively ensured that the refugee camps would not gain stability, so as to retain the Palestinian threat as a scapegoat for Lebanese conflict.

The aftermath of a civil war from which Palestinians emerged hated and blamed did not provide an opportune climate for the improvement of refugee conditions in Lebanon. As noted by Deirdre Collings, a common opposition to any re-establishment of Palestinian power emerged in post-Ta'if Lebanon.¹⁶⁰ The continued threat of Palestinian militarism was used by the government, alongside the specter of permanent settlement, to justify appalling conditions for refugees in Lebanon. While the deplorable restrictions on Palestinian human and civil rights would be presented as a necessary measure to forestall nationalization, the connection between improved conditions and citizenship is feeble. The more compelling conclusion is that severe living conditions provided a means of control over the refugee population.

In post-Ta'if Lebanon, all aspects of refugees' lives were regulated, including health, education, employment, property, and movement. The restrictions were put in place specifically for the purpose of deteriorate living conditions. In *Palestinians in Lebanon: The Birth of the "Enemy Within,"* Jihane Sfeir writes: "With the end of the Civil War in 1991, the Palestinian community was considered a convenient scapegoat for the war in Lebanon. In the post-civil war era, restrictions...in the camps were taken to extremes."¹⁶¹ Sfeir claims the Lebanese rational is that integration in Lebanon would render refugees ineligible for aid from UNRWA. Even if there were a link between improved conditions and naturalization, this is clearly not the case. Integration does not

¹⁶⁰ Collings, *Peace for Lebanon*, 289.

¹⁶¹ Sfeir, "Palestinians in Lebanon", 27-28.

violate UNRWA's very precise definition of Palestinian refugees, as descendants of "people whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict."¹⁶² Additionally, this position fails to take into account the severe absence of camp jobs following the expulsion of PLO and PLO funding, as well as the inability of the UN agency to cope with the refugee crises.

The severity of camp conditions and insufficiency of UNRWA are examined in Rosemary Sayigh's *Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future*. Regarding health, Sayigh reveals that "UNRWA's subsidies for hospital treatment now cover two thirds of the cost of a hospital bed only-not doctor's fees, tests, or treatment...Low-income Palestinians who need surgery have to beg or die."¹⁶³ The deterioration of medical support is confirmed by a 2001 report by the Institute for Palestine Studies, which claimed that "between 1989 and 1995, the number of hospital beds available for Palestinians in Lebanon decreased by over half, from 0.56 beds to 0.25 beds per 1000 [refugees]."¹⁶⁴ The dates cited in the report are particularly relevant because they identify the discrepancy, or significant drop in care and options, between the end of the civil war and the post Ta'if years. The deteriorating health situation is a reflection of camp living conditions, a lack of any substantial UNRWA support, and the drastic need for improved rights for Palestinians.

¹⁶² "Palestinian Refugees," UNRWA, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=86>.

¹⁶³ Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon," 48.

¹⁶⁴ Muhammad Ali Khalidi , ed., *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 2001), 14.

Vulnerability

The civil war held particularly severe consequences for vulnerable groups of refugees, such as children, women, and non-ID refugees. In the post war years, children suffered from abysmal health conditions, a lack of education, and, as a result of labor restrictions, no incentive to pursue what education was available. They continue to grow up unwelcome and deprived. Similarly, a large percentage of women in the postwar camps faced health complications. This was commonly compounded by the loss of a husband and father to the war, leaving women to single handedly support a family with sparse employment prospects or aid. Another group of Palestinians particularly vulnerable in post war Lebanon are known as non-ID refugees. The term refers to refugees that lack documentation, and are thus ineligible for UNRWA assistance. Because of Lebanese policy towards Palestinian in the post-Ta'if era, conditions for these groups of refugees were particularly harsh.

While it is difficult to determine the exact impact that conditions in Lebanon have had on the development of children after the civil war, a combination of oral history and statistics can begin to provide a reliable picture. According to a 2001 report from the Institute of Palestine Studies, 21 percent of Palestinians between the ages of 7 and 18 are not enrolled in schools.¹⁶⁵ When compared to neighboring host countries, dropout rates in Lebanese UNRWA schools are almost double. In *Palestinians in Lebanon: Uncertain Future*, Rosemary Sayigh pinpoints the dropout rate at 36.6 percent, as compared to a 6.2 percent rate in 1978 during the early years of the war.¹⁶⁶ These figures illustrate the

¹⁶⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Uncertain Future," in *Peace for Lebanon?*, ed. Deirdre Collings (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 105.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

difficult conditions in which child refugees grew up after the war. Additionally, they reveal the extent to which these issues are particular to Lebanon.

The situation described in the IPS report indicates adverse living situations substantiated by the children themselves. In 1998, Mayssoun Sukarieh, a volunteer teacher in the Shatila camp and graduate student at the American University of Beirut, worked with students between the ages of twelve and fifteen to document their experiences and outlook. The testimonies attribute the low enrollment and high dropout rates to a combination of bleak future prospects and the need to help support family. One student, Muhammad Daud explains the impact of the labor restrictions on their lives and the way in which they view education: “Even if I finish school, the fact that I’m Palestinian means that I’ll be a house painter, baker, garbage collector, electrician, or mechanic.”¹⁶⁷ According to Ahmad Abu Shelleyh and Walid Balkis, this fate is reinforced by the teachers themselves, who encourage student dropouts and instill a fatalistic outlook towards future possibilities.

He [The teacher] uses all kinds of abusive language. He has a nickname for each of us: “garbage man,” “thief,” “house painter,” and so on. Thanks, teacher, for reminding us where our future lies. If the teacher sends one of us to the principle...[he] advises us to leave school and work as a blacksmith, electricians, or garbage collector (for boys) and as a seamstress, or hairdresser, or domestic servant (for girls)...Sometimes I wonder Why [sic] do the Lebanese even bother to prevent us from practicing certain professions like medicine, engineering, and law in addition to seventy-three other occupations? After all, Jericho School can only produce garbagemen [sic], house painters and blacksmiths.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Muhammad Daud “Through Childrens Eyes: Children’s Rights in Shatila Camp” ed. Mayssoun Sukarieh , *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24 no. 1 (1999), 52.

¹⁶⁸ Ahmad Abu Shelleyh and Walid Balkis, “Through Childrens Eyes: Children’s Rights in Shatila Camp” ed. Mayssoun Sukarieh, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24 no. 1 (1999), 55.

The deplored standards of education within the camps clearly had a strong detrimental impact on the motivations of students to stay in school, as well as their future outlook. As a result, many disheartened students dropped out of school. In *Palestinians in Lebanon*, Sayigh notes the particular “demoralization of adolescent boys, mostly out of school, without training programs, and unemployed.”¹⁶⁹ Palestinians experienced a significant drop in both the availability of adequate education, as well as a drop in the viability and relevance of education itself, heavily influenced by the lack of available jobs.

A deteriorating quality of life also seriously shaped the way in which Palestinian children and youth viewed their own refugee identity within the Lebanese state. Shatila students Mariam Azzouka and Usama Abu al-Shayekh explore the consequences of their surroundings on their Palestinian identity:

This identity of ours brings us nothing but trouble...What can we belong to in Shatila? To the garbage? Or to the alleyways that stink of sewage? Why should we belong to Shatila?...In Shatila we're not treated like people, and we have no future. So we don't carry the identity of the place we live in, and the identity we carry has no place.¹⁷⁰

The statement clearly indicates the extent to which camp conditions contributed to the development of identity among Palestinian children and the effect of Lebanese restrictions on their feelings of self worth.

Healthcare is another area in which camp conditions are unacceptably poor. A total of 9% of refugees between the ages of 1-3 are categorized as “vulnerable children,” compared to 2% in Jordan. This constitutes a callous state of affairs, as there is only one

¹⁶⁹ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon: Uncertain Future, 103

¹⁷⁰ Muhammad Daud, “Through Children’s Eyes: Children’s Rights in Shatila Camp” ed. Mayssoun Sukarieh, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24 no. 1 (1999), 53.

UNRWA doctor for every 10,000 refugees and only one hospital bed for every 4000.¹⁷¹

The Shatila interviews indicate that this reality had similar adverse affects on children. In a statement entitled *In the Camps, We Die of Minor Illnesses*, Wissam al-Ahmad wrote

Two years ago my brother got asthma, which affects many people in the camps because of the unhygienic conditions and the very humid houses, as well as the stench of garbage and sewage. In most places, asthma isn't a serious disease... But my brother dies of asthma. Why? Because we could only treat him at the clinics reserved for the Palestinian people.¹⁷²

In the post Ta'if climate, Palestinian children suffered greatly from the Lebanese position on refugees. Their education was not a priority, their lives not worth saving.

Palestinian women are another group of refugees that suffered particularly difficult conditions after the civil war. Because of the large number of husbands and fathers who were killed or imprisoned during the civil war, a disproportionate number of widowed women bear the entire responsibility of raising a family. In *The Case of Lebanon*, Hala Maksoud writes that women were under “tremendous pressure” in the post war years, suddenly responsible for the well being of their families with virtually no resources or support.¹⁷³ This enabled them to defy traditionally defined gender roles that limited women to the domestic sphere, evidenced by an increase in employment among female refugees¹⁷⁴. But the need to find work outside the camps left many children absent both parents, reinforcing the difficult conditions children were experiencing.

¹⁷¹ Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, (Beirut, Institute for Palestine Studies, 2001).

¹⁷² Wissam al-Ahmad, “Through Children’s Eyes: Children’s Rights in Shatila Camp” ed. Mayssoun Sukarieh, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24 no. 1 (1999), 55.

¹⁷³ Hala Maksoud, “The Case of Lebanon,” in *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*, ed. Suha Sabbagh (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996), 96.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Women also experienced an upsurge in health issues in the aftermath of the war. In *Palestinians in Lebanon*, Sayigh found that stress related conditions were particularly common among mothers. Heart abnormalities, asthma, diabetes, insomnia, and kidney and thyroid problems were all common, a possible result of sudden increases of pressure and responsibility.¹⁷⁵ The testimony of Fayza ‘Adas illustrates the hardship that refugees in Lebanon experienced in wake of the civil war. While ‘Adas is originally Lebanese, she married a Palestinian, lives in Burj al Barajneh camp, and says “I feel Palestinian in my blood.” After her husband died in the civil war, she described the camp living conditions in 1994:

UNRWA has cut off its services, the PLO is no longer paying the small sums it used to allocate to the families of martyrs. Our family for example hasn’t received anything for eleven months. Plus, I am not well - high blood pressure, kidney problems, swollen glands, a slipped disk, and hardening of the arteries.¹⁷⁶

The testimony illustrates what many women in the camps were experiencing after the war. Alone and without support, ‘Adas struggled with supporting a family and her own health issues, some of which may have arisen from that pressure. Both of these conditions would have been greatly alleviated with any support from the host country. Instead, she is faced with a state policy specifically designed to keep her in a position of subordination and destitution.

A testament of the extent to which this situation has been ignored is the eerie lack of historical scholarship covering Palestinian women in Lebanon. Though they do appear in the work of such authors as Hala Maksoud and Rosemary Sayigh, this is by no means

¹⁷⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon: Uncertain Future, 103

¹⁷⁶ Fayza ‘Adas “Palestinian Refugees of Lebanon Speak” interviewed by Aql, Abd al-Salam, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 no. 1 (1995), 55.

the norm. More commonly, relevant books such as *Arab Women*¹⁷⁷ and *From Patriarchy to Empowerment*¹⁷⁸ dedicate sections to women in both Lebanon and Palestine, but barely touch on the case of Palestinian women in Lebanon. That absence suggests widespread neglect of the situation, further evidence for the difficult predicament of Palestinian women in Lebanon.

Non-ID refugees are the third major group of refugees that suffer particular vulnerability in post-Ta'if Lebanon. According to a report by the Danish refugee council, 3000 Palestinian refugees were still without identification papers in 2007. They entered Lebanon primarily in the early 1970s as a result of the Black September expulsions of Palestinians from Jordan. As their country was descending into civil war, they relied on PLO protection and never registered.¹⁷⁹ With the 1982 PLO expulsion, and the subsequent end to the civil war, they are stranded in a country where they have no standing as either residents or refugees. They cannot function within Lebanese society, but are simultaneously unable to benefit from refugee support such as UNRWA health, education, and nutrition services. Until Lebanon recognizes the plight of the population living within its borders, non ID refugees will continue to occupy a liminal space, deprived of rights or protection.

Law and Restriction

The postwar employment prospects are some of the most consequential for refugees in Lebanon, as they determine income, quality of life, and importance of

¹⁷⁷ Suha Sabbagh, ed., *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996).

¹⁷⁸ Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *From Patriarchy to Empowerment: Women's Participation, Movements, and Rights in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

¹⁷⁹ "Survey Report on the Situation of Non-ID Palestinian Refugees," (Lebanon, Danish Refugee Council, 2007), 5.

education. The two primary factors impact the labor situation in postwar Lebanon are the retention of pre-war exclusionist labor laws, and the disappearance of many camp jobs with the expulsion of the PLO. In *Palestinians in Lebanon*, Sayigh claims “If by ‘employment’ is meant salaried, contract-regulated work (with notice, pension, and accident insurance), the figure of 90 percent unemployment...is justified, since few but UNRWA employees enjoy this situation.”¹⁸⁰ Poor employment prospects have contributed to a decline in education among refugees in the wake of the civil war. According to Sayigh, Lebanon is alone among Palestinians host countries with a rising illiteracy rate among refugees.¹⁸¹ The impact of the job market on education is reflected in the testimony of refugees themselves. Abir ‘Adnan ‘Adas of Burj al-Barajneh camp describes the situation in 1994:

UNRWA’s...department of social affairs suspended the aid we were receiving on the grounds that my 17-year-old brother had completed a blacksmith training course at the “Orphans House” in Beirut and that he therefore has a profession. What they didn’t take into account is that he’s been unemployed since the course ended. We have all stopped our studies because we don’t have the means.¹⁸²

‘Adas’ account illustrates the casual link between the lack of jobs and disenchantment with education. This is reinforced by his mother, Fayza, who claimed “the education of our youth is wasted. Our university graduates are forced to work as masons.”¹⁸³ By retaining strict labor restrictions in the post war environment, the Lebanese government condemned refugees to the deteriorating conditions of the post-Ta’if era, without the prospect of class mobility through work or education.

¹⁸⁰ Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon,” 50.

¹⁸¹ Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon,” 49.

¹⁸² Abir ‘Adnan ‘Adas, “Palestinian Refugees of Lebanon Speak” interview by ‘Abd al-Salam Aql, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 no. 1 (1995), 54.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 55.

The postwar conditions endured by refugees were the direct result of legislation specifically designed to prevent Palestinians in Lebanon from achieving any measure of power in the country. The legislation is based in the post Ta’if transformation of the “Palestinian cause” into the “Palestinian Problem.” According to Zeina Halabi and the Centre for Comparative Studies of Law and Society, the laws are designed to expedite repatriation through the belief that any improvement in living conditions will be interpreted by Israel as a weakened argument for the right to return. But even as Halabi acknowledges that this translates into “legal and political discrimination,” she simultaneously demonstrates the Lebanese postwar mentality by grouping all Palestinians into one category with such comments as “the Palestinians, whose pivotal role in the civil war was undeniable.”¹⁸⁴ While Palestinians in Lebanon undoubtedly played a role in the civil war, these statements and generalizations single them out for blame, and blatantly ignore distinctions between Palestinians in the country. It neglects a noncombatant refugee population that suffered heavily in the war, and reinforces the vague conception of a faceless Palestinian threat that can be attributed to the entire refugee population.

Because of the way in which civil rights have been connected to eventual settlement, the anti-nationalization stance taken in the Ta’if accord has structurally cemented refugee conditions. In *Palestinians in Lebanon*, Sayigh claims that there is no umbrella legal system that governs refugees in the country.¹⁸⁵ Instead, they are subject to a series of *ad hoc* government decisions. She has documented a series of post-war vetoes against reconstruction of destroyed camps, the establishment of any new camps, and against expanding camps, ensuring that refugees would continue to occupy the same

¹⁸⁴ Zeina Halabi, “Exclusion and Identity in Lebanon’s Palestinian Refugee Camps: a story of sustained conflict,” *Environment and Urbanization* 16 no. 2 (2004), 42.

¹⁸⁵ Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon,” 44.

overcrowded spaces despite population growth.¹⁸⁶ In the post war political climate, the legal decisions governing refugees became increasingly discriminatory.

Post Ta’if amendments targeted Palestinians specifically, singling them out for substandard rights and conditions. A prime example of this is law 296 which forbids the ownership of property by Palestinians. Article 11 of the Lebanese Law of ownership states that “real property ownership is the right to use, enjoy and dispose of a certain property within the limits of the laws, decrees and regulations.”¹⁸⁷ Law 296 of 2001 is one such exception, stating that “it is not permissible to have any real estate property, by any person who is not carrying a nationality from a recognized state, or by any person if the property is contradictory with the constitutional precepts.”¹⁸⁸ Palestinians, as stateless refugees, have no recognized nationality, and so are unable to own property under the law. Furthermore, according to Jaber Suleiman, the mention of constitutional precepts refers to the post-Ta’if amendment against the permanent settlement of refugees in Lebanon. The law not only forbids the acquisition of new property, but renders any existing property ownership illegal. It is clearly aimed at Palestinians in Lebanon, and is particularly troubling given the context of a diminished number of camps and legislation against camp expansion or repair.¹⁸⁹

A second area in which Palestinian rights were curtailed in the wake of the civil war is Lebanese Labor law. Palestinian workers rights in Lebanon have always been compromised by the principle of reciprocity. Employment eligibility for many jobs in Lebanon was determined by whether or not foreign workers’ countries allowed Lebanese

¹⁸⁶ Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon,” 43.

¹⁸⁷ “Lebanese Laws, Title II, Article 11.” <http://www.lebaneselaws.com>.

¹⁸⁸ Suleiman, “Trapped Refugees,” 4.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*

nationals to occupy those positions. Palestinians, as stateless refugees, slipped through the cracks of this law, as they did not have a state that could grant reciprocity. According to Human Rights Center Executive manager Suheil Al-Natour, conditions deteriorated since the civil war. A 1993 decree added such lower income positions as teachers, waiters, and drivers to the list. In 1995, an ordinance introduced by Minister Asad Hardan added construction, agriculture, metalworking, and domestic labor to the list of restricted occupations.¹⁹⁰ There are some exceptions to the restrictions, and Lebanese labor law does not include low income service jobs. But by and large, Palestinian workers in Lebanon face overwhelming odds when seeking work. Between housing and employment, post war legislation effectively crippled the lives of refugees in the country.

State Security

The Lebanese policy abandoning the refugee camps to their own devices is detrimental to Lebanese-Palestinian relations, and also constitutes a threat to the security of the host country. The government refuses to take any responsibility for the camps in an attempt to keep them ostracized from Lebanese society and discourage integration.¹⁹¹ But this reinforces the reputation of the camps as security islands and off-the-grid havens. The resultant migration of outsiders into the camps serves to further taint their reputation within Lebanese society, but also creates a security predicament that might actually be solved through a reversal of government policy. As such, it would be well within Lebanese interests to take formal responsibility for the camps.

¹⁹⁰ “Human Rights Dilemma of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, February 15, 2007.” Souheil-Al-Natour, Archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹⁹¹ Sari Hanafi, “Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, Laboratory of Indocile Identity Formation,” 48.

In *Exclusion and Identity in Lebanon's Palestinian Refugee Camps*, Zeina Halabi argues that Palestinians in Shatila camp now claim that they are in the minority. While their estimate of 70% “outsiders” is likely inflated, it does demonstrate that Palestinians feel a strong presence from other groups, to the extent that it has become a point of tension.¹⁹² This outside presence is a direct result of a Lebanese policy of neglect, and has had serious consequences for the reputation of the camps as well as Lebanese security.

The adverse impact of outsiders in refugee camps is best demonstrated by the Nahr el-Bared incident of 2007. Nahr el-Bared, home to 35,000 refugees, was totally demolished by the Lebanese army in a 104 day battle. In a 2010 article, Ismael Sheikh Hassan and Sari Hanafi confirm that the antagonists were not local camp residents, but Fatah al-Islam, “an Islamist fundamentalist group, predominantly foreign, that had implanted itself in the camp only six months earlier.”¹⁹³ A 2007 article in the Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star* entitled “Stigma of summer fighting adds to discrimination facing Palestinians” explores the ways in which the fighting increased negative perceptions of the camps. “The Lebanese Army and the Internal Security Forces are basically looking upon Palestinians as a Threat...Many Lebanese blame the Palestinians for allowing Fatah al-Islam into Nahr al-Bared.”¹⁹⁴ The Nahr al-Bared incident demonstrates the serious problems surrounding the camps and the ways in which they are perceived. That said, it also provides an opportunity and impetus for the government to take on a measure of responsibility for the refugee population in Lebanon.

¹⁹² Halabi, “Exclusion and Identity,” 44-45.

¹⁹³ Ismael Sheikh Hassan and Sari Hanafi, “(In)Security and Reconstruction in Post-conflict Nahr al-Barid Refugee Camp,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40 no.1 (2010), 1.

¹⁹⁴ Simba Russaeu, “Stigma of summer fighting adds to discrimination facing Palestinians,” *The Daily Star*, October 29, 2007,4.

Conclusion

As Michel-Rolph Trouillot claims in *Silencing the Past*, historical events are a position, not an absolute.¹⁹⁵ Palestinians in Lebanon are widely remembered as faceless violent agitators that drew the country into fifteen years of devastating civil war.

Following the end of the war in 1990, the government portrayed their camps as dangerous security islands beyond the reach of law, a continued threat to the state. But this narrative reflects a highly politicized position and a clear incentive to ossify the negative reputation of refugees in the country. Oral histories, political speeches, interviews, newspaper articles, and historical scholarship present an alternate narrative.

Palestinians refugees fled to Lebanon seeking temporary haven from war and occupation, without plans for permanent settlement or armed conflict. Yet they arrived in an unstable, newly independent country, one that still reeled from the clutches of colonialism. A country deeply divided along lines of religion and class, where their very presence was perceived as a potential threat to state security. The majority of refugees faced discrimination, confinement, unemployment, and constant vulnerability, enforced by a government seeking to suspend them in a position of subordination. Given this treatment, it is unremarkable that refugees leapt at the chance for a measure of autonomy with the arrival of the PLO in 1971.

While Palestinian actions in Lebanon, including border raids against Israel, certainly had an impact on stability within the country, the controversy that they sparked was primarily the result of uncovered sectarian tension. Lebanon was already mired in internal conflict and division under an ineffective government, and in no position to

¹⁹⁵ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 15.

support a refugee population. The Lebanese civil war was a result of a divided country and dysfunctional political system, not the actions of an oppressed refugee population. Yet the event served as a pivotal impetus, shifting the public perception and memory of refugees as victims to a role of violent instigators.

It is no accident that post-Ta’if governments have capitalized on public blame of Palestinians for the war. In doing so, they present refugees as a continued threat to stability, and justify postwar discrimination intended to avert Palestinians naturalization. The preservation of a common scapegoat has been critical to sectarian unity following a devastating fifteen year war. No party in Lebanon, certainly not the Palestinians themselves, has advocated for *tawteen*. But as a potential sectarian threat to a Maronite dominated government, they face unrelenting harsh treatment and few opportunities. The lives of Palestinians in Lebanon are shaped not only by the historical events with which they are intertwined, but the way in which that history is remembered.

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